This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

CHRISTIE'S FAITH.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"HIGH CHURCH," "NO CHURCH,"
"OWEN: A WAIF," "MATTIE: A STRAY,"
"CARRY'S CONFESSION,"
&c. &c.

"Look to the Poor."
COWPER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1867.

The right of Translation is reserved.

250. o. 173.

LONDON
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

INSCRIBED

TO

MY FRIEND

W. T. WATTS, ESQ.,

ST. IVES, HUNTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
III.	THE BEARER OF GOOD NEWS . . .	226
IV.	AFTER DINNER	253
V.	TEDDY AT HOME	271
VI.	FERNWELL AND SON	288
VII.	GOOD AND EVIL	300
VIII.	THE LAST EFFORT	312

BOOK I.

OUT OF LUCK.

CHAPTER I.

"BEHIND TIME."

A DECEMBER night—cold, damp, and wintry. A merciless night for men and women adrift upon the streets—a night that gave no quarter to the houseless. There were houseless poor—late as was the hour—round the gates of a west-end workhouse; people who hoped for shelter in the face of despair yet, and prayed for the chance that should put a roof over them, and take their feet from the wet flagstones.

A scene striking enough—with more than enough of ghastliness and horror in its midst—but still very common-place; attracting not a great deal of attention from late wayfarers—an every-day picture to which society had grown accustomed or hardened.

People wrote about this once or twice a year; the Poor Law Board inquired into it, and sent

their general manager, who made out a report, and spoke his mind therein; occasionally a leading article appeared in the papers on this subject, and soft-hearted folk shivered in their snug home-corners at the troubles aloof from *them*, and wondered, perhaps a little, why things like it should come to pass in the richest city of the world. Philosophy, cold as the night on which our story opens, had told them long ago that every city had a reverse side akin to this; that whilst the world lasted there would be, as a counterpoise to its wealth, that awful penury and squalor, against which even workhouse gates were barred. All this could be proved by figures, by theories of moral counterpoise, and by laws governing "the masses," and only crotchety people objected to unavoidable evils.

The stragglers round the gates of the Union—where union is weakness—did not moralize after this fashion, or take comfort from the great rules by which they were starving in the streets that night. They were angry, a few of them, the sturdiest and strongest, at the night porter's inflexibility; they discredited the assertion, made behind the little iron grating from which the trap

dropped now and then, that the place was full; had been full for hours, and was running over with fugitives luckier than the "outsiders"—with old hands, who had come early to the feast, and fought hard for a night's board and lodging.

There were twenty or thirty left to shift for themselves—the lucky ones on the steps of the Union, huddled together for warmth—women who looked like Macbeth's witches reduced in circumstances, and their occupations gone; the unlucky ones with their backs to the wall, and the inconsiderate full length on the stones, fast asleep in the night drizzle, caring for nothing but rest. It was an odd, out-of-the-way corner for a workhouse, hemmed in by a picture-gallery and a barracks—Poverty arm-in-arm with the Fine Arts and Glory! Ten thousand pounds had been given for a painting only yesterday by the authorities over the way—five shillings could not be found in London to stay the empty stomachs of those night shadows.

There was a short cut to the Strand between these three national institutions; but wise-heads shunned it after dark; sometimes the poor were importunate and begged hard, especially when

Cerberus had locked up for good. Still people came that way occasionally—soldiers, police, tramps with a soul above the workhouse; thieves, with no souls at all that they thought worth mentioning; women in rustling silks, worse off than either, though they had not made the discovery yet awhile, and were disposed to be shocked at the troubles *en route*; men on night-work at the printing-offices, and gay young fellows "seeing life" with their eyes half-shut and cigars in their mouths—youths bound West to the devil's head-quarters.

It was striking twelve when another woman, whose object was food, warmth, rest, and shelter from the cold, came round the narrow turning leading to this house of charity—came very slowly and wearily, with her bonnet awry, her shoulder to the wall for support, her head bent very low, to keep the rain from her face. By her side, more indifferent to the inclemency of the season, plodded a loose-limbed, wretchedly-clad boy, capless, shoeless, and with his hands in his pockets. It was no great effort to keep pace with the woman whom he accompanied; he was a little in advance of her at times, indulging in a solemn

kind of jig to keep his feet warm, and looking back with no very amiable expression whilst he danced.

"Come on," he adjured at the next corner—"why don't you come on?"

"It's all very well to talk of coming on—and I—like this. You should have more patience with me, boy."

"I just wish I had."

The corner was turned, and then mother and son—such is the degree of relationship existing between these two—halted at the sight of the supplementary outcasts lingering in the lamp-light, round the door whence no relief was likely to issue.

"Hollo!" said one, more wakeful than the rest, as the new-comers approached, "you're late home—they've been sitting up for you, missis, ever so long, and the rump-steaks and inguns would have been cold by this time, on'y they've been kept on the hob, with a kiver over 'em!"

"Oh! don't talk like that, you fool!" cried a lank woman from the reserved seats by the door; "you're a nice one to make game? Who is it come?"

She peered from a tattered shawl drawn over her head, failed to identify the arrivals, but remained still curious.

"Is it Mrs. Simmons?" she asked.

"It's no one with whom you're acquainted, my poor creature," said the new-comer, almost patronizingly; "I've never been here before—I hope I shall never come again. It's something for one like me to come to this, I can tell you."

"Oh! you're one of the fine uns," said the woman, covering herself in her shawl again; "and too good for us, by a long chalk. P'raps," with bitter satire, "they'll let you in. Shall I ring, m'am?"

"If you please."

"Then I don't please, on second thoughts, for somebody 'll slip into my place, if I get up."

"Don't make a row," adjured her companion; "we shall have the bobby round agin in a minit, and he'll move the lot of us on, if we ain't quiet."

"I think I shall get locked up," said a ruminative individual, with an empty pipe in his mouth, for company's sake; "I don't see the good of getting wet for nuffin."

"Let me come by, please—some of you," en-

treated the last comer; "I am very—ill—I've been walking all day, and I shall drop—soon! I've done twenty miles to-day!"

She pushed her way through the little crowd about the doors, and reached her hand towards the bell. No one made room for her willingly; no one was particularly interested in her troubles; there were women as badly off as herself, more unsympathetic; and this extra unit of discomfort was nobody's business, and roused nobody's interest.

The woman rang the bell; her companion recommenced his flat-footed jig outside the crowd, and evinced but little interest in his mother's course of action.

After the bell had been rung twice, and its dismal clanking had reverberated through the "House," the trap was lowered behind the iron grating, and the face of the night-porter appeared once more.

"It's no good keeping on ringing like this—we're quite full—we've been full since eight. You'd better go on to the Refuges, some of you."

"I haven't rung before, sir—I'm very ill—I've only just come."

"We're quite full."

"I've never been here before, so help my God, sir!" intreated the woman; "I have walked twenty miles in the wet—I and my boy—if you'll let us in, we shall be very thankful."

"We're quite full."

"It isn't as if I was regularly at this, sir," she said; "I never took a penny from the parish yet, or from anybody—I'm a lady born, I really am; and I'm almost too proud to come in now, but then I am awfully ill—and weak—and hungry."

"We're quite full."

And with this ominous echo to all pleading, he shut up his trap and hastened out of the draught.

The woman turned quickly, almost indignantly, towards her contemporaries.

"What would you do now?" she said, in an excited tone, at which there was a general laugh.

The poor have a keen sense of humour, and it surmounts all obstacles, and flashes forth in strange places at times.

"What's there to laugh at in me?" she said, passionately enough; "is it because I am not used to your beggar's tricks, your beggar's shifts to get into this place? Why won't they let me in?—I

am poor enough, wretched enough, ill enough for charity! What are these places for, I wonder?"

"You should have been here earlier," said one; "if you keep late hours, you must take your chance with us, my lady. They can't make room if there isn't room, I s'pose."

"I passed here at seven o'clock, and there were heaps of 'em fighting to get in," added another; "if I had tried my luck then, I should have been in bed by this time, and blowed out with water gruel."

"What refuges are near here? What does he mean by refuges?"

"Oh! don't you know? Oh! how fine we are, although we look as if we'd roughed it before this, too."

"I've roughed it all my life," said the woman; "but I have managed to live without help before —I might get money now, perhaps, if I chose to ask at the right place, it's just possible—but I only want rest for one night! What's this about a refuge?"

"Well, it's gammon," was the reply; "it's a dodge to get us away from here, and send us to places that have been jammed up hours ago."

"Ah! I thought as much," said the woman; "what will these do all night?" she added, with a gesture implying "present company."

"Some 'll stay; some will take to walking in an hour or two; I shall get locked up myself; some p'raps they will find room for, if a swell comes by and makes a row for us, and says he'll put it all in print."

"It's hard you can't hold your palaver," whined the woman on the steps again. "What with the cabs going home from the theyaters, and what with your row, there's no shutting one's eyes a minit."

"Where's Upper Ground Street?" asked the woman who had lived without soliciting charity till that day. "How far do you call it to Henwood's Wharf?"

"Don't know Henwood's Wharf. Upper Ground Street's about a mile."

"Over Westminster Bridge, and down Belvidere Road, isn't it?"

"Yes, if you can't pay Waterloo. What do you want there?"

"Come, Zach."

Zach, who had been silent and observant all

this time, who had not desisted from his quiet dance to himself, like an attendant imp, with an old man's face, responded at once to the summons, and mother and son drifted away from the work-house.

"We ought to have kept to London, Zach, all our lives; then we should have known more about it. But it's here, there, and everywhere, until one gets confused with places, and no luck in them. Now see what we have dropped to!"

"Father will turn up at Christmas, if you'll go to him," said the boy, assuringly, "p'raps he and Teddy have had better luck. Teddy's allers so clever with his fingers!"

"Don't go on like that," moaned the woman. "You were taken away from bad example early. I wouldn't have you go wrong, Zach. I tried hard not!"

"Many's the chance we've lost," said this youth, with a sigh; "we've done our wust now, and it's all up with both of us till they come back. Father said our spec would turn out 'all dickey!' and blest if he isn't right, as usual. What's the matter?"

The woman had stopped, and was standing against

the closed shutters of a shop, with her hand to her heart.

"Wait a bit," she gasped. "I shall be better presently."

"You're done up, you know."

"I know that well enough."

"What are we going to Upper Ground Street for? What's the good of it?" asked the youth, in an aggrieved tone.

"We may as well go there as anywhere else. We may find a friend there, for there's a chance of it."

"One of our chances!" added the boy. "Oh! yes."

"One of *ours!*" replied the woman; "that's all!"

They went on again down Parliament Street, resonant enough with noise still—cabs still dashing along the streets, and the pavement not yet void of life. Once or twice they solicited alms without effect, the boy, a judge of character, looking askance into each face as it passed him, and essaying those travellers who looked less obdurate than the rest. Only looked so, for they kept their hands out of their pockets, and had nothing to give away, and

talked of the police when the boy was too persistent with his unnatural whine.

"It never is no good on wet nights," grumbled the boy, returning to his mother's side. "They're in such a hurry, lest their clothes should get spiled by the wet. I never knew such a lot."

Surreywards till Belvidere Road was reached, and then, turning down that narrow thoroughfare, with timber-wharves, mills, factories and dust-yards on their left, where the dark and swollen river ran. Silent enough in the first hour of a black day was this road—only business people ever gave life to the thoroughfare, and business was over here. It was a winter when "things were slack," and things slack with the wholesalers was to slacken the sinews of existence in the hard-working, and bring a lower wage with every Saturday. There was no night-work in the Belvidere Road at that time; the steam engines were at rest, the contractors' horses were sleeping in their stables, the inhabitants of the little dark streets on the right were all abed, dreaming of better times, perhaps; from end to end of the street, a stretch of muddy road and clammy pavement, lit by shimmering street-lamps; not even the tread of official feet

echoing in that quarter, as mother and son, shadows of life, plodded onwards in the wind and rain.

At the end of Belvidere Road, and passing under the Waterloo Road arch into Commercial Road, another river-side street, dank and desolate as the wanderers. There were steps in the side of the arch leading to the upper road, and the boy suggested rest there, but the woman muttered something about the police, and kept steadily on her way, reeling at times as though she had been drinking. She wished she had been for that matter, but luck had been against her all day—and she had walked and begged along twenty miles of country road without success. Now she was in London at last, and the last chance for her, she thought, lay in Upper Ground Street.

Upper Ground Street, be it asserted, for the benefit of those whose topographical knowledge is limited, is a continuation of Commercial Road, but more narrow, and considerably more dirty—a cut-throat kind of thoroughfare, terminating at the foot of Blackfriars Bridge. The woman, heedless of the condition of the roadway, walked ankle-deep in mud, looking up at the names upon the

walls, and over gates and archways—the boy plodded on, not too curious concerning his mother's motives for this quest, careless also with his steps, proceeding straight ahead without much deviation, and plashing through mud banks, pools of water, anything, sleeping even by the way, nodding his head as he progressed, and only brought completely to his senses by a break in the pavement, a dip in the road, an inaccurate line of kerbstone ending with an iron-post, that cut Zach's reverie short, and knocked him out of time a little.

Roused suddenly by the latter means, Zach became conscious that he had outstripped his mother —that his mother was not even in sight, a fact which made him rub his eyes, glance over his shoulder, and then run back at a pace more rapid.

An instant afterwards he was sitting on a door-step by his mother's side, the mother with her head bent forward, and her bonnet at her feet. A world-worn, fierce face it was in the light of the gas-lamp flickering above her—the face of a proud woman, even then it seemed, in its dirt and haggardness, and with long brown hair streaming about it wildly.

"I've done my—best," she gasped; "I can't go any further—Zach. It's be—yond me!"

"Take it quietly—you'll be better in a minute."

"Don't you think that I'm going to die, Zach—just now? That wouldn't do."

"No—that wouldn't do, I s'pose."

"You couldn't be worse off, that's one com—fort—*could* you, now?"

"Well—not much wus off," said the boy, after a moment's reflection.

"You'd find your father," she said with a strange exhibition of jealousy at that time and in that place, "and he and you and Ted could get on together better without me—you and he and Ted wouldn't miss me at all, and one the less is every—thing!"

"What's the good of going on like this?" said the boy more wisely. "Which is the place you want to find?—what's the cove's name?—what's the name of the wharf you asked about at the workus?"

"When your father and I quarrelled last, I swore I'd try and live without him for a year—and I've kept my word at least. We've managed to live

somehow, Zach—and we've lived honestly, too. *They* can't say as much."

"I 'spect not."

"He wasn't a good husband to me ever, and he turned you both against me, and made fun of me."

"Let's go on now."

"I can't move a step further, Zach," she said. "Try and find Henwood's Wharf on that side of the—way. There's a lamp over the gate—and you can read a little bit—why, I taught you myself! You know what a capital H's like, and an E and a D?"

"I believe you. Keep quiet till I turn up agin. And the place dropped on—what shall I do?"

"Ring the bell, and if anybody comes—ask if his name is Wynn."

"And then?"

"And then come back to me."

The boy waited for no further instructions, but hurried along Upper Ground Street, pausing before the entrance to each wharf, and trying to make out the letters above or on the gates. A sharp lad, whose schooling had been neglected,

but whose wits were about him, for a light shining in an upstairs window of a house adjacent suggested a chance of obtaining information without further trouble on his own account. He walked into the road again, disinterred a few small stones from the mud, and flung them with accuracy at the glass, producing a sudden rattle thereon, that must have startled considerably the inmate or inmates of the room, for a shadow darted across the window-blind, and then a face came between the blind and the glass, and took stock of things below, till a few more pebbles scared it back once more.

Finally the window was softly opened, and a woman's voice called out,

"What is it? Who's that trying to break the windows?"

"Which is Henwood's Wharf, ma'am? Here's some one down here wants it 'ticklerly."

"Well, to be sure!—and you to frighten a poor woman like this!—I'd be ashamed of myself! Henwood's Wharf is the first across the road on your left. You might have seen that for yourself. Is anything the matter?"

"No."

"That's well, at any rate."

The window was banged down, the boy ran across the road to some gates set in a deep archway, and jumped up at the bell, which was clanging wildly the instant afterwards, rousing many echoes within and without that street, and setting more dogs than one baying at the noise.

Before the bell had ceased ringing the shambling feet of one advanced in years were heard approaching—slow, scuffling feet, accompanied by the regular tapping of a stick.

"Who's there?" demanded a wiry voice at last —"what is it?"

"Is this Henwood's Wharf?"

"Sure it is."

"Is your name Wynn, guv'nor?"

"My name is Wynn—what of it?"

"That's all right, then—thankee."

And away through mud and water scampered the gamin at his utmost speed. Meanwhile, the man of the name of Wynn waited on the inner side of the gate for further information; he was somewhat hard of hearing, and the departure of Zach, barefooted as he was, had not been noticed. The watchman, believing that the messenger was still without, croaked forth half a dozen questions

through the keyhole—what was wanted of him?—who had sent the stranger?—was anything wrong at home?—was Polly ill?—had anything happened in Griffin Street?—was the place on fire?—and the silence following these inquiries perplexed the watchman very much.

"This is a rum time of night for boys to be out a-larking," soliloquized Mr. Wynn; and then his feet scuffled back out of the archway into an open space of ground, heaped with barrels, and huge piles of material covered with tarpaulins, on which the rain-drops were rattling like small-shot.

Mr. Wynn was short as well as feeble, and stooped so considerably, that a hunchback might have had the advantage over him in the matter of uprightness—evidently a man whose old age deserved rest at nights, and a berth less trying to the system. He was half across the yard, and making for a warehouse facing him—a huge pile of brickwork, with an archway through its base, where the Thames stole into an inner dock at high tide, and brought the barges into the bosom of Henwood's Wharf—when the bell rang again, this time more loudly than ever.

"That's a trifle aggrawating," said the watch-

man, coming to a full stop again—"I wonder if it is a lark, or a—dodge?"

Mr. Wynn retraced his steps, accompanied this time by a small ratty quadruped, that burst from under the tarpaulin, and barked and pranced before him.

"Come on, Speck—let's see what all this means, gal."

Swinging his huge lantern in one hand, and plodding on with his stick in another, Mr. Wynn went beneath the archway to the gates again. Reaching the gates, he set his stick against them, and asked the nature of the business of the applicant without. This time a woman's voice responded to his summons, and the rattle that he had half drawn from one capacious pocket, was dropped to its depths in his amazement.

"I am a woman you knew in old days, Mr. Wynn, over sixteen years ago, when you were a gardener down in Warwickshire. Will you let me in, and—give me food."

The old man gasped for breath beneath the gateway. A trap fell back in the gate, and reminded those without of the workhouse they had recently quitted—a voice called through—

"Not she who ran away with Fernwell long ago?—don't say it's Miss Ellen, please!"

"Yes, it is I and my boy."

The gate was wrenched open, and a shaking hand held forth a lantern close to the woman's face, that did not flinch from the test, but looked hard beyond into the shadows where Charles Wynn stood.

"You are alone?—*he's* not with you?"

"No."

"Oh! dear—come in. Down, Speck—come in, I say!"

CHAPTER II.

LATE VISITORS.

MOTHER and son passed through the door made in the great gates of Henwood's Wharf, and stood with the watchman in the dark entry—stood for awhile, until the tired woman sought the support of the wall, and then slid slowly downwards in a crouching position against it.

"You are ill, Miss Ellen—Mrs. Fernwell, I should say."

"I am very ill, Mr. Wynn—very poor—or I should not have come here to ask for shelter till the daylight. Only till then, and I shall be gone, sir."

"There's very little shelter in this place," said the old man. "The warehouses are locked, and the foreman keeps the key of them. I mind the yard all night—when it rains hard, I stop under here."

"They should have—treated you better—an old servant," murmured the woman.

"You're very kind to say so," replied the watchman. "I don't complain—I have been paid fair wages for fair work. But—oh! dear!—how is this?" And he held out his lantern at arm's length, and looked into her face again.

"It was to be expected—everybody expected—it but me."

"Ah! you—poor woman!"

"Has the guv'nor anything to eat?" asked the boy, *sotto voce.*

"Why, it's just as it should be," said the watchman; "I've been a-wondering why I didn't have my appetite to-night as reg'lar as usual—and I like things reg'lar—I always did. It's been a-fidgeting me very much, why I had no appetite for supper, and put me out of temper—at *my* age, too, when I ought to have known better. So the bread and meat which Polly brought me is still wrapped up in the paper—and that's odd."

"Where is it?" asked Zach; "you haven't lost it—surely."

Mr. Wynn produced from his capacious pocket

a small parcel, which he tendered to the woman; then he seized his stick from the corner, and hurried into the rainy yard. He came back with two or three sacks across his arm, which he flung on the pavement, and then shambled off once more returning with a second burden of the same material.

"There, that's all I can do," he said apologetically. "If you had come last week there were soft goods—rags and things—a thousand tons of them from France. But we cleared 'em off, and are full of oil at present. You'll find the corner by the gate more out of the draught. When you've rested a bit, your boy can go round to Polly's—she's my daughter, Polly is—and wake her up, and tell her—"

"Nothing," added the woman sharply; "I want no favour from anybody. I never asked a favour in my life until to-night. This is my first—and last."

"You were always a little odd," mused the old man; "no one knew it better than I did. Oh! dear—dear—dear! and this the end of it!"

"And this the end of it!" reiterated the wo-

man, so strangely that the man leaned forwards and looked intently at her again.

The lantern shone on both their faces then—the woman weary of the world, and the man whom the world had aged and bent—and it was doubtful which face was the deeper lined.

"You're ill," said the old man—"you're very ill, Mrs. Fernwell."

"I have been ill all the week—it's a catching here that comes suddenly and stops the breath almost. I wish it would—altogether," she added with a husky rattle that did duty for a laugh.

"And you're not eating."

"No—I can't eat—I am tired—it's too much for me now, the sight of victuals. Here, Zach."

Zach snatched at the bread and meat proffered him, and began at once. He could eat at all times and seasons—he was a growing boy whose appetite grew with him. He slid slowly down to his mother's side, holding his thick meat sandwich in both hands, and tearing at it in a fashion more dog-like than human. He ate with haste, too, as though the watchman and his mother might repent of their abstinence, and in his eagerness consumed sundry pieces of newspaper with which the sand-

wich had been enwrapped, and which he could not spare time to remove. Speck, the terrier, watched the process of demolition for a while, until Zach suddenly kicked out at him, and made his teeth rattle; then Speck, offended, retired behind his master's legs.

"I wouldn't be in such a hurry," said the watchman to the boy, "in case your mother should come round a bit."

"Go on, Zach," said the woman. "It wasn't for myself I asked for food just now, Mr. Wynn, but for him who turns against me almost when I have nothing to give him. Oh, you don't know how hard I have tried to make this boy more honest than his brother—to keep him as much as I could from his father."

"Two children, then?"

"Two."

"And Fernwell?"

"He is tramping towards London now—I am to meet him in Whitechapel on Boxing-night, at a haunt well known to both of us. He wants this boy, because he's very sharp—and quick to learn."

"To learn what's bad, you mean?"

"God help him!—yes."

"It's a hard story," said the watchman; "and to think that you, a lady born, should drop to this."

"I don't say it's hard," said the woman; "I chose my lot in life at seventeen years of age, and left them all because they would have stopped my marriage. They told me that they'd cast me off, if I took up with that man—you remember the day—and I said 'let them.' I said that I would not ever stoop to ask a favour of them, whatever happened to me. And then one day I ran away from home."

"Ah!" sighed the old man in assent, "you did."

"I say now, that they weren't kind to me—that they drove me to it, not knowing my right nature—that they were hard, and cold, and unforgiving—weren't they?" she asked, eagerly; "weren't they, Wynn?"

"They didn't understand you," said the old man, speaking with a reserve.

"Where is *she*?"

"Abroad—always abroad."

"You have not seen her since—when?"

"I have not seen her for twelve years."

"Tell her some day that I came to see you—that I, turned away from the workhouse, stole in here. She will be glad to say, 'I warned her of it years ago—it's all come true, just as I prophesied.' She was always a vain woman!"

"She is your sister," remarked the old man; "I'd try and think a little more of that, just now."

"I will not," asserted the woman; "I never called her sister—she was the daughter of a strange mother, and no sister to me—nothing like one—never was one—never, by Heaven!—never!"

"I wouldn't go on like that, Mrs. Fernwell."

"I never forgave her—I never shall," she said; "in all my mis-spent, awful, soul-destroying life, I kept my pride; and I let her last words stand between her and me, as they will even to the Judgment. She can't say that I ever asked her for a penny; that my husband and I, or my children—beggars and tramps, the whole of us—disgraced her with our importunity."

"She did not understand you," said the man again; "but I have thought once or twice that you never exactly understood her."

"Oh! yes, I did."

"And she——"

"You take her part—that's like you—like all the rest. I wish that I'd never come!"

"How did you know that I was watchman here?"

"Some years ago I found out that. We tramps find out a great deal. We—is the boy asleep?"

The sudden change of tone, the dropping of the voice to a husky whisper, was remarkable. The watchman held the lantern to the boy's face—yes, Zach was in dream-land, and snorting heavily.

"He's not unlike his father."

"Oh! don't say that," pleaded the woman—"you're sure that he's asleep?"

"I have not much doubt of that."

"Then come here on this side of me," she whispered; "I've something to tell you which he needn't know just yet. I've come here—*to die!*"

The old man would have receded from her in his horror, but a lank hand had slipped from the shawl, and clutched his wrist.

"I have been dying all the week—I wanted to die in the workhouse, and then they would have kept the boy, and he might have been made something honest of in time. But it wasn't to be, and he must get his own living—he's able, after a way

of his own. I *was* just a little trouble to him—perhaps."

"If you're really ill, I'll send for a doctor. Oh! dear me—if you were to die in this place of all others—*you!*"

"It might sting *her* pride in turn—it would serve her right."

"But you'll not think of doing that," urged the watchman; "it's not worth the trouble and the excitement, it really isn't! I wish that you would let me give you my Polly's address, and go away now."

"I will not die under obligations—I'll not have any favours," reiterated this demented being.

"I'll ask it as a favour to me—and Polly will be glad to see you. Why, you and she were girls together down in Warwickshire—about the same age, I take it. You'll catch cold under here—you will indeed."

"I should be glad to lie down a little while," said the woman, softening, "and the wind comes in terribly sharp through that archway yonder. That's where the river is?"

"Yes."

"I have often thought of the river! But I was

always a coward, and my mind wouldn't come to it quite. And then there is the boy—poor Zach, if he only had a chance of doing well, he would turn out a bright lad—he is *so* clever!"

"Is he, now? Well, he don't look like it!"

"Sharp as a needle, Mr. Wynn," she said, "and intelligent. Ah! you'd be surprised at him. If you could find him a place—an errand boy's, or anything—he'd do you credit. He's not a thief. I've kept him from all that's wrong as well as I could. It's been a hard struggle—but oh! how I have tried! Where does your daughter live?" she asked, suddenly.

"Over the way—four doors off—she'll be sitting up at needlework to-night, so you won't disturb her. Tell her that I sent you, and what your name is. I shall be round at six o'clock. Tell her, too, that the brandy's in the cruet with the cork in it, on the third shelf in the cupboard, to the left of the fireplace, in a sugar basin—the old china one, which Martin says is waluable, so I've left it in my will to him. Here, Zachary, your mother's going to have a decenter lodging than this for a night—wake up, boy."

"I'm awake, guv'nor," said Zach, "I've heard

you. I shan't forget where you've stowed the brandy—mother likes brandy when she can get it —and if your crib is on the top floor over the way, where the light is, why, I heaved up at the winders long ago, to ax about the Wharf."

Zach was on his feet again, ready for fresh adventure, stamping warmth into his feet after his usual practice—a tread-mill kind of movement, that surprised Mr. Wynn, and brought Speck jumping and barking round the performer.

"I'll go," said Mrs. Fernwell, rising with difficulty, "because I can't bear this cold any longer —and you were always a friend—you never gave me a harsh word, did you?"

"Why should I? How could I?"

"Ah! I was your young mistress then—and you a faithful and old servant. How things have altered for the worse. To think that I," she added, with her strange pride uppermost once more, "should come to *you!*"

"It is singular."

Her pride in that hour was more singular than her appearance there, and the old man might have meant that, for he was of a reflective nature, and the woman's words had troubled him, and shaken

his nerves. He knew—he had heard in some way—that the young mistress had fallen very low in the scale after she had run away from home, and a stern father had disinherited her; he did not think ever to meet her again with any attribute of the old nature clinging to her. But he had expected to see her one day or another—and here she was, looking very like the figure that his fancy had sketched out.

The woman, swaying to and fro, walked towards the gate. She was restless, and could not settle down to her great misery. She would go to Mr. Wynn's house, and see his daughter—interest her, if it were possible, in this boy whom she dragged from place to place. At the gate, and before the watchman had reached it, she fell forwards, with hands extended, and slid once more to the ground.

The boy gave a cry, and ran to her.

"Mother!—mother!—you'll keep strong a little longer!—till luck turns up for us! Why shouldn't you?"

The woman did not answer, and the boy looked up into the watchman's face, as he knelt there supporting his mother's head.

"What is it?—why won't she speak to me?

She—she never looked like this afore—never exac'ly like this, sir. Mother, wake up—the brandy's just by, you know! It'll be all right in a minute. Guv'nor," with a wild glare towards the watchman again, "she ain't dead?"

"I—I think she is," said the watchman, bending over her more intently. "God be good to her!" he added, moving back a step, "I'm sure she is!"

CHAPTER III.

POLLY WYNN'S PROTEGÉE.

ONLY another paragraph for the newspapers! —only another woman dead of neglect, begging at workhouse doors in vain, growing weaker and weaker in a world sceptical and pitiless!—a world that has paid its poor-rates, and been warned too well of the evils of indiscriminate alms-giving—lying down to die in the shadow of an archway in Upper Ground Street. An unpleasant affair, whilst the newspapers were fresh on club-room tables and in pot-house parlours, irritating honourable boards of guardians not a little, as if it were their fault!—as if they could help people dying; as if they had not their own dinners and suppers to think about!—as if these waifs and strays from other folks' parishes could not turn up at proper hours, and abide by the rules governing

Unions in general. An occurrence that had happened at an unfortunate period—winter-time, when the poor *will* be troublesome!—and that revived all the old objectionable questions as to how the parish money was spent—what share fell to those in distress, and all those little matters so foggily explained on the back of the notices left with us honourable ratepayers. If there be a London parish collecting sixty thousand pounds a year in poor-rates, and women die for want of a pennyworth of gruel, what is that to do with the question?—surely it is nobody's fault but the woman's, and the coroner on the inquest may insult guardians, overseers, and porters, if it please him—that's *his* business, and makes him popular. And if thoughtful beings entertain an idea that it *is* somebody's fault, for which somebody will surely answer some day, why, let them keep their crotchets from official ears—let the doors be barred still in the face of Want, and "No room" shouted through the grating till the crack of doom shivers all excuses!

There were a newspaper paragraph, a coroner's inquest, and a verdict condemnatory of parochial regulations, and then a railway accident, and a fine

sensation murder swept from public recollection the case of Ellen Fernwell.

An old man and a woman were but troubled with thoughts of Ellen Fernwell after the funeral, and they were lodging in the top floor of a house in Upper Ground Street. A tall, dingy house enough, that had seen better days, and had been one of a row with a view of the river before river frontage became too valuable, and speculators built seven-storied warehouses, and monopolized in every fashion the Thames side of the way. The houses near Henwood's Wharf had come to grief in business times; the owners of ground-floors took in washing, did mangling, sold clammy sweetstuff and parched peas; the first-floors were chiefly rented by dressmakers, or foremen from across the road, and society lost caste as it ascended heavenwards, until on top-floors "such people" as this watchman and his daughter were discovered.

The watchman and daughter, Charles Wynn and Mary of that ilk, were sitting facing each other in the top-floor, then, a few days after Ellen Fernwell's funeral. A cheerful little room enough for a top-floor, as clean and bright as scrubbing and polishing could make it, possessing

a fine show of willow-pattern plates on two shelves near the window, a square of carpet under the deal table, six cane-bottomed chairs, with moveable cushions, aggravating in their moveableness certainly, and inclined to wriggle away mysteriously from under the sitter; a capacious pulpit kind of arm-chair, in which a small man, like Charles Wynn, was easily engulphed; a hearth-rug, on the patchwork principle, and an old-fashioned china teapot on the mantel-piece.

Evidently a tidy, even a comfortable home—a home that boasted even the luxury of flowers, represented by four haggard geraniums, that Miss Wynn was trying hard to nurse through the winter, and that objected to the process, and seemed, with their long leafless branches, to be praying for somebody to kill them. But they were "still green in the wood," Miss Wynn affirmed; and when the summer came into Ground Street again, it was Miss Wynn's opinion that they would reward her care of them by bursting into leaf; and if the wind blew the smoke of the chemical works "t'other side of the river," why a flower or two might be screwed out of them. She had seen fancy geraniums in full bloom in

Upper Ground Street before this time—ay, and in that room too.

Father and daughter were not unlike the geraniums by the window there—both were spare of form and lean of aspect, and yet "green in the wood," still. They were living under difficulties, perhaps; they had fought hard and well for an honest living for many years together, and though the effort tired them, it had not done them much harm—on the contrary, as may be apparent hereafter, a great deal of good. They were poor, but they were very hard-working, and very, very independent. One lodger of remote times, a tin-plate worker by profession, and a connoisseur in rum by inclination, had been known to call the Wynns "stuck up;" but then he had proposed to Miss Wynn, and been rejected on account of his tastes and *her* father's necessities, and he was not justified in his criticism, unless he intended to allude playfully to the third-floor.

As these Wynns will trouble the reader for a while, we will sketch them in outline ere we listen to the subject of their discourse.

Mr. Charles Wynn was a man of sixty-five or

sixty-six years of age—a little thin man with a big nose and puckered cheeks, a pale-faced Punch with protuberant and thoughtful grey eyes. A sharp looking old man even yet, with energy about his thin mouth, and an expression far from vacillating in his general aspect—an old man who evidently could stand by his rights when he thought them infringed upon. Probably a gentleman with not a bad opinion of himself, and one whose self-respect had done him a good turn more than once. Down in Warwickshire, when he was by many years a younger man, his fellow-servants had called him "Consequential Charles," though he had scarcely deserved that cognomen even in his best days. He was a gardener then—head gardener to Henwood's—but by some means or other he had degenerated into a watchman, and wore a long great-coat with a cape to it, after the fashion of the force in early days. People said that there were ten years more of life at least in old Charley Wynn, he was so active on his legs in summer-time, and there was such vigour in his bristly grey hair, cut very short, and in scrubbing-brush fashion all over his head. He was proud of his hair yet,

and his daughter Polly cut it regularly on the fourth Saturday in every month, and shampooed him once a quarter.

And Miss Wynn—Polly Wynn as it will be our duty to call her from this day to the end of the story? Well, Polly Wynn was of fragile exterior, not so tall as her father,—who was five feet two,—with a pale face not unlike his, subdued by a smaller nose, and eyes less obtrusive, and of a deeper grey.

They were motherly eyes, and, in better times and under different circumstances, would have looked on little children of her own, and watched them very tenderly through life, but Polly had been crossed in love very early, and got over it very early too—before she came to London, in fact. Polly had not fretted, or grown sentimental, or even revenged herself, on herself, by marrying the man who was fond of rum, but she had become more quiet after her disappointment. She had always been quiet in her way from fourteen years of age. When she was fourteen her mother died—her mother whom her father had married late in life—and she had had her father to take care of and keep house for—not to mention

her brother Martin, of whom more anon. She had been a methodical little body all her life, but she had also been a cheerful body, and a cheerful heart is a mine of gold to its possessor, scattering its gold amongst others. A poor woman with odd ways and a cheerful heart, then—such was the watchman's daughter. An odd way of looking on the best side of everything, and a child-like trust and confidence in her father, still more odd to witness in a woman of two and thirty years, and attributable to the even tenor of her life, and long companionship together. She was more womanly in many things fifteen or sixteen years ago than she was at the time we take up her story; she had fallen in love, furtively as it were, and had fretted a little when it came to nothing; but she had kept her love troubles to herself and from her father, who had had troubles of his own; and when the wound was healed, it had all seemed "so silly an affair," that she had grown ashamed to let the daylight upon it ever again. Polly was not aware that her troubles had done her good, and that she would have been of harder and coarser grain, less like a daughter, had her heart not expanded a little in

the days of her youth. And though it *was* a silly affair—possibly the reader may catch a glimpse of it as we jog onwards—it had been all the better for Miss Wynn.

So a week or thereabouts after Ellen Fernwell's funeral, in the early evening after tea, and before Mr. Wynn's duties for the night had commenced, father and daughter sat facing each other in the firelight—the daughter working busily at her needlework, the father with his full-veined hands upon his knees, watching the fire and his daughter's face alternately, and Speck, the terrier, watching all three from his post in the centre of the patchwork rug.

"I'm a thinking that it's hard to be worrited like this at my time of life," Mr. Wynn was saying in a voice the reverse of irritable, at least—"worrited by a boy who's no kind of relation to me—worrited into liking him somehow too."

"No relation, father. Certainly no relation in any way to us—but then so drifted to us, and so much adrift himself like!"

"I've thought of it seriously—I've turned it all over, in every way, in *my* mind," he said with emphasis, as though his mind might be considered

an infallible place to turn things over in, "and I don't see my way very clearly what to do."

"Shall we write to Martin to-morrow—shall I write to him to-night?" asked his daughter.

"I don't think that Martin need interfere," said Mr. Wynn gravely. "I have always judged for myself through life, and found myself strong enough to keep straight. What's Martin to do with this, Polly?"

"He's not dull in his ideas, you know."

"I'd rather take your idea than his, a hundred times, if I was disposed to take anybody's—which I aint, never," he added with the same calmness of demeanour. "I think I've made my mind up to get—rid—of—that boy."

Polly continued stitching briskly, and the old man, after waiting patiently for her response, rubbed his short grey hair backwards with his hand, and said,

"Why don't you say something, Polly? What's the good of going on like this?"

"What shall I say?" said Polly, quickly; "if you've made up your mind, father, it isn't for me to interfere. You know so much better what's for the best—you know the world so well—and I,"

stretching out two hands impulsively, "am so afraid of it—have never ventured into it. I rely on you."

"Good girl. You might do worse," was the complacent answer.

"But still I think we might look after this boy for a time—just for a week or two—his mother wished it, you say, and she was very fearful of him."

"Oh! I'm sure she was. I saw it in her face, poor woman! I never *was* deceived in people's faces."

Polly did not call to his mind just then the past time, wherein he had been deceived by a smiling secretary, and promoter of a new company, to invest his savings—his very small savings—in a grand venture, which ended in utter collapse, and chained him to the Henwood service, such as it was, for ever.

"I think, father," she continued, "that as you've spoken to Mr. Tinchester and got Zach on the barges, where he'll be out of mischief all the day, that it won't hurt us much to find a lodging for him here, and start him with a breakfast in the morning."

"For three shillings a week?—then there's his supper too."

"And then there's the chance of our keeping him straight till *she* comes back from abroad, and does something better for him. She ought to do it—the sister of the woman who died last week—and we should keep the boy from the streets—save him from things I don't like to think too much about," she added with a shudder.

"It might be best—I've been thinking so all along," he said without paying much respect to his daughter's share in the suggestions. "He's a sharp boy, and if I only made him out a little more, I shouldn't mind a bit, Polly—even if she never did anything for him. Why, he's her own born nephew, Zach is, and furrin' parts may have done her good, or coming back may warm her heart towards the lad. And the funniest part of it all is, that I like the boy; he is so mighty sharp in some things. I must have been very like him when I was about his age, I fancy."

"Then we'll keep him."

"Yes, we'll try him for a month. But if he don't turn out grateful in that time, out he goes—or we'll try him another week or so, eh, Polly?

I'd like to see him ever so much more grateful for what I've done for him. Why, look at them there boots I bought for him in the Cut last Saturday to go to the funeral in, in style. They're thick enough for any company."

"And cheap they were."

"I'm not in the habit of paying through the nose for anything—thank God, we've got our wits about us yet," he said chuckling. "Thank God, we've got money to buy boots for other people—eh, Polly?"

"Amen—amen!—why, you're coming round to your old self to-night, and you've been so dull all day."

"I'm always dull when I'm worrited, Polly," he explained; "but things are off my mind, and I'm as happy as a king. But he ought to be more grateful, you know. And if he had cried a little more about his mother, I should have liked to see it, but he didn't."

"He sniffed," said Polly.

"Yes, he sniffed a little, now and then; but he didn't take his loss what I call properly, and I really do believe, my girl, that them boots have made him proud already. If I thought so, I'd

knock him down, and take 'em off again."

"The boots give him a position," said Polly reflectively and decisively.

"Well, perhaps that's it," asserted Mr. Wynn.

They gave him a rectangular position, and an elephantine kind of march at present; but then they were two sizes too large—although Polly had stuffed the toes with wool—and the heels themselves were quite a legacy in iron. Zach had run barefooted for years, and though he *was* proud of his boots—Mr. Wynn was quite right in that particular—yet they preyed upon his mind, as well as his feet, and were difficult to manage just at present.

They were talking of the boots still, when their arrival was heralded by a formidable clatter up the stairs, and then Zach Fernwell, with a cap on his head, and a very dirty face beneath the cap, came unceremoniously into the room, and dropped before the fire with hands outspread.

"It's precious cold upon the river, I can tell you," he said; "it blows all ways at once at Blackwall. Gosh! how it did cut round the barge, and how old Perkins's teeth rattled. I don't think I shall like the water much."

"I'd take my cap off when I was so disposed," said Mr. Wynn, caustically. "It's considered perlite in company."

"Oh! is it?" replied Zach, removing his cap at the hint. "I haven't had nothink to do with company yet—and manners I've got to learn."

"A trifle of 'em."

Zach tucked his cap beneath him, and proceeded to warm both hands, glancing askance at man and woman near him. A quick, sharp glance it was, that took in both on the instant; Speck, the terrier, looked like that when doubtful if praise or blame were about to fall to his share.

"We've been talking of you this last half-hour," said the watchman, "and a wondering what was to become of you."

"And a wondering what was to become of me! Well, that's odd!"

A short, sharp laugh, to match his glance of a moment since—an unpleasant, hard laugh, that was older than his years. What was to become of him! Well, he had wondered himself more than once about that—it had troubled his mind without grieving him in any great degree. He should come uppermost somehow—he should meet his

father and Teddy in good time, and could take care of himself till he found them at the "Jolly Fiddlers," in Whitechapel. He was a little concerned to think that they had not turned up there, or inquired about him and his mother—he knew that they had not, as will presently appear.

"And we think that it will be better for you to stay here, Zachary, until you get a good character, and a place more to your liking," said Polly, at this juncture.

"I've been a thinking that it mayn't be better. I fancy that I should like to keep on my own hook, mum."

"Good gracious—what hook?"

"On my own hook, with nobody to interfere," said the boy, very thoughtfully, staring at the fire. "What's the good o' me trying to please everybody —it's not in my line. I'm old enuf to keep shop for myself—it isn't as if I was a kinchin."

"Don't you like the home, Zach?" said Polly, quite timidly.

"Ye-es," replied Zach, in a hesitative manner.

"Then why not try and make it home—and let father and me take care of you till you are a little older. Your mother wished it."

"Well, you see, this is a swell sort of place," said Zach, quite argumentatively, "and I haven't been used to chimbley ornaments and carpets, and a fire to come to. I was with mother, and mother got on badly allers, coming the fine when it didn't pay, and we'd nothing to eat. I don't feel," he added, with an uneasy writhe, "quite comfurable here."

"What do you want to do?" asked Mr. Wynn, somewhat nervously.

"I shouldn't mind trying my luck about here—keeping to the barge-work till the winter's over, at any rate; but I don't want to larn a lot o' things, or be sent to night-school, or any of them dodges. I'd rather be my own master, guv'nor, thankee."

"Oh! would you?" said governor dreamily regarding him. "Well, I'm sorry to hear it."

"Sorry!" said the boy, again looking askance at Mr. Wynn. "Not both on you sorry?"

"Yes."

"Both on you sorry to get rid of me?" ejaculated Zach, with his spasmodic laugh. "Well, that *is* a good un—that gets over a cove. That's the wonderfullest thing that's happened yet!"

He pushed his tangled black hair back from his

forehead, and then scratched at it with both hands, laughing again in that odd, dry fashion, which perplexed his hearers at its utter lack of merriment. It was his mother's laugh, thought Mr. Wynn, and Zach had come to it by inheritance.

"So you can think it over," said Mr. Wynn, rising, and taking his stick from the corner; "if it's worth your while to let us have your salary, allowing all we can for pocket-money, you may stop while you behave yourself. But you'll have to show a little more gratitude before we think it's worth *our* while. Polly, I'm off."

Mr. Wynn walked across the room with dignity, and took from the back of the door his great-coat, into which he would have struggled without assistance, had not his daughter risen also and crossed to his help. He was disturbed by this youth's demeanour, this youth's stolidity, and he went downstairs without offering any further advice. Polly Wynn came back to the fire, and proceeded to stir it with that gentleness characteristic with people to whom coals are valuable and scarce. The little woman on the chair, and the boy on the hearth-rug, were silent for some time; both were thoughtful, both perplexed.

It was a thoughtful face of the motherless lad heaped at the feet of the little woman—a face that wore more of cunning than intelligence, thanks to the adverse fates which had met the boy from his birth. The face of a lad who had lived hard, and had learned to distrust early in life—who was distrusting then the motives of the good people upon whom he had chanced. He would rather be his own master, he thought—he was old enough to "rough it." He had only himself to take care of—it was not like having a mother on his hands, and now there was the chance to do as he liked slipping away from him. For these people wanted him to stay, and everybody else had wanted him to go—from the shop-doors, whence big errand-boys had shoved him; from the deep doorways, whence the clutch of the police had dragged him; from the corners of streets and market-places; everywhere he had been very much in the way, until this "swell place" in Upper Ground Street had first seemed too comfortable for anything save Heaven, and then too embarrassing for anything like home. He hoped this funny little woman would not ask him to stay again—he was even doubtful if it would *pay* to stay; and he was sure he should be

much more happy when he was his own master! Besides, he was not certain what they wanted him to stay for; it might be "a plant" of some kind—he had heard of people "collaring coves like him, and taking them off in cabs to reformatories, where they were "whacked" into being good boys, and into saying all kinds of things on their knees. That wouldn't suit him, and he'd better make sure of matters and depart.

Polly Wynn began to talk to him again, and he winced at her voice—soft and kind, and unlike any voice that he had ever heard, for it was a voice that always startled him and got the better of him.

"Your mother wanted you to stay, Zach," she repeated, suddenly.

"She said so. She said lots of things she never meant, mum."

"She meant this."

"I'm not so sure on it. You didn't know her so well as I did."

"I knew her before you were born, child."

"Did you, though?"

"When she was a lady, and I only a servant in her father's house, Zach. That's why I should

like to see after you till you're big enough to take care of yourself."

"Big enuf!" said Zach.

"I want you to try for a month—less time, if you like—if you can't take to this as a home, where you'll be welcome so long as you're good and honest. If you take to it after that, and grow up with us, we shall be proud to see you getting on; and some day, in your turn, you might help us, and understand better why we want to help you."

"I can't make that out," said Zach; "it isn't as if I was a nice boy, or you was Teddy. Nobody ever really cared for me but Teddy—that's my big brother, mum—and I just should like to see him agin, and go shares with him in everythink. He'd make you die of larfing with his games, when he's in one of his funny ways—why, I've actiwally seen him make father laugh."

"What is he?"

Zach looked up at his interlocutor. He didn't exactly know what Teddy was, he said, after awhile; he was sharp enough to get his own living, though, and he *helped* father wonderfully. Teddy could do everything—dance jigs, sing comic

songs, throw double summersaults at fairs, fight—oh! how Teddy could fight! Father couldn't do without Teddy, he knew, for when Teddy got into trouble—about once every six months he managed to be nabbed by the perlice, he did—things weren't on the square till Teddy came back again. He, Zach, had been in search of Teddy himself, at the "Jolly Fiddlers," Whitechapel way, but nobody had heard anything about him, or his father. The boy ran on about his brother, for the first time showing animation on one theme. The brother was evidently the model at which he aimed; and Polly Wynn listened and shuddered, and saw the danger in this hero-worship looming up from the distance.

"Your mother did right to take you away from this Teddy," said Miss Wynn, quite warmly; "he meant you harm—he would have brought you up to steal, and you would have gone to prison like him, growing worse and worse."

"I'm not afraid of prison," said the boy, doggedly; "it never frightened Teddy—it's better than the workus any day. It's warmer, and you don't work so hard."

"Ah! so much the worse."

. "And you won't like me here—nobody ever took to me."

"Let me try. Let me—an ignorant woman enough, Zach—be your guv'ness for a little while, teaching you all I know, which ain't much, but which may make you very different. Oh! Zach, I will try so for your own sake, as well as your mother's. You don't know why I try so hard yet—you will some day, my boy, and bless me for it."

"Why don't you tell a chap, now?"

"You wouldn't understand—I could not explain," said she, more warmly still; "when you're a bigger lad—quite a man—it'll all come easy to you. You don't—oh! good Lord!—you don't *want* to steal?"

"No."

"You'd like to lead an honest life, and grow up respectable?"

"Ha! ha!—'spectable?—that's a joke, anyhow."

"And I would try to take your mother's place, and be a mother to you, Zach, for I am fearful what will become of you, trusting in yourself like, and looking after those who can't do you any

good—from whom your mother kept away, for your own sake. Why, I've heard of boys beginning like you in places like Henwood's, and working up'ards till they got rich men, and rode in coaches, and all by trying their hardest to do their best in everything."

"Do you think anythink of that's true?"

"True as Gospel, Zach."

"What's that?"

"In good time I'll tell you, if you'll let me. There, promise me, boy, to live with us a bit?"

He was strangely hard to persuade to his own good—strangely ungrateful for the unselfish efforts of the friends who had risen around him. He believed in this woman, despite his own suspicious nature, however, and he gave in at last, as though he were conceding a favour in lieu of receiving one.

"Look here, mum, I'll take it for a month at three bob a week. I haven't been used to a place to live in, and it mayn't suit. It don't fit jist now—it's like these blessed boots the guv'nor bought me for a Christmas-box, and I may get used to one as well as t'other, if I try hard; but it isn't like trotting through the country, and seeing fresh

things, with lots of races to go to, and lots of pickings to be found there—off the grass, not out of pockets, mum!" he added, as Miss Wynn started somewhat.

"And you'll do your best to like us?"

"I shall like *you*," he added, frankly, "and the guv'nor ain't a bad sort."

"You must call him Mr. Wynn."

"I'll call him what you think he likes best until he kicks me out of doors."

"He'll not do that, Zach."

"Oh! yes, he will," said Zach in reply; "I'm not the sort of chap that anybody will take to long. I never liked anybody much," he added, fiercely—"why should anybody try to like me?"

He curled himself close to the fender, and let his head drop upon his breast, as he half knelt, half crouched there. He went to sleep suddenly in that position, and it was not the happiest or most contented face in the world into which Polly peered a few minutes afterwards.

"I hope it's for the best," she murmured, after a long stare at her protegée—"I think it's for the best."

CHAPTER IV.

A FRIENDLY CALL.

ZACH FERNWELL settled down in his new home, then. He gave up three-fourths of his weekly salary for the board and lodging afforded him by Charles Wynn and daughter, and he dismissed, or seemed to dismiss—it was doubtful which—all thoughts of Teddy from his mind. Teddy had been the one theme on which this boy could discourse—finding his brother an objectionable topic to introduce, Zach Fernwell was silent enough on other subjects. He was certainly a boy difficult to understand. Mr. Wynn had professed as much, and wiser men than Mr. Wynn would have been puzzled to define Zach's character, or to prophesy concerning its future development.

Zach might be termed a difficult study—a something hard to impress, still harder to move.

Boys in his situation—boys from the streets—even boys whose lives had been akin to his own, might have softened wondrously under the great change, and shown more readily their gratitude for past and present interest. Zach was not demonstrative; he was watchful and reserved—he might be even suspicious still. For years he had been a vagrant and tramp; the last year he had been his mother's companion, and the mother's restlessness at her position, her nervous fears for him, added to a wild meaningless pride that puzzled and fretted him, had not done him any good. He could not comprehend the mother's complaints, made even to him, against the father; he did not bear the father any great amount of good-will; he had been kicked and knocked about as well as his mother in earlier periods, but he was old enough to see the futility of fretting for past indignities. His father was a "pretty good sort" when things went well with him, and why his mother could not take the rough with the smooth he had never been able to make out. He liked his mother better than his father—that's why he kept to her, he assured himself, when he could have given her the slip at the fairs, and gone back to Whitechapel—and he had felt

her loss more deeply than the watchman Wynn believed.

Zach was certainly a boy who reflected upon his chances in life; he began soon to think that perhaps it *would* pay to remain the winter with the Wynns. He did not know if he were grateful for their interest in him; he had a faint idea that three shillings a week squared all obligations, and that the Wynns were glad of the three shillings; he could not understand their wish to see him leading a brighter and a better life—their wish to make a man of him. Why, his own mother, who had played at being honest, never taught him the best way to remain so, or sought to get him a berth anywhere; she had kept him on the tramp with her, and it was the old life with the father and Teddy over again, only not quite so jolly! His mother had never been jolly—not even with brandy, to which she had been partial at times, and dashed at like a mad woman when luck was with her—occasionally when luck was very much against her.

But the mother was gone, and he had to shift for himself. He had been presented with clothes less tattered than those which he had worn on the

night his mother died; he had been introduced into a sound and serviceable—if ponderous—pair of boots; he had been found a place on a barge, to make himself generally useful and see nobody stole anything—which was a good joke, he thought, for *him!*—for the first time in his remembrance, he had caught a glimpse of what home was like. The whole affair was novel and worth trying, and Zach went at it in a business sort of way, showing some prudence, but no feeling—which, alas! was not to be wondered at in one whose feelings had been deadened so long.

In his business life, Zach proved himself a sharp boy. He was naturally sharp—for he had lived by his wits, young as he was—and the foreman of the wharf took him off the barge work, and gave him the run of the yard during the day, constituted him errand-boy, watch-dog, anything that might be useful in that great landing-place and storehouse, where barges came with every tide into the inner dock, to load and unload, and heavily-laden waggons rumbled in and out all day under the great archway, where Zach's mother had given up the ghost.

Zach fell into business habits. He had profited

by example all his life, and the better example now before him told upon him by degrees. He saw a method and rule governing all things at Henwood's Wharf, and he was quick at imitation. He was quick to find out whom it was best to please, too—therefore a judge of character in a small way. He knew who gave him the most orders to fulfil, who paid him his wages on a Saturday night, who held in his hands the power of summary dismissal, and he took stock of these facts almost by instinct. There was one spiteful carman who had an unpleasant habit of knocking him down for trifling offences, when he was in the way—and when he was not in the way, it mattered little which—and Zach took stock of him also, and thought that he should like to make a run at him behind, and pitch him into the dock—which was not an amiable thought of Zach's, though it may prove that he treasured offences against him more carefully than he noted down small kindnesses.

But then he had been only a few weeks with the Wynns, and Rome was not built in a day. In those few weeks he had altered; watchful eyes had noted an improvement in him; one woman,

simple and tender-hearted, thanked God for it already. Zach was like a boy waking up from a bad dream; he was dazed still, but the consciousness of something better in his midst was slowly asserting itself. Presently he would be thoroughly awake—alive to the new world, and with the black past far away in the shadows to which it belonged.

Six weeks after his promise to Polly Wynn, he was certainly not the Zach Fernwell of our first chapter. He had found a quiet yet comfortable home to return to after a day's work; he had always seen there a little grey-eyed woman anxious to make him welcome; to inquire concerning the day's incidents, and make a story from them; to bother him now and then about his letters, but that did not matter much—and after all there was something about the "guv'nor" he did not wholly dislike. During those six weeks he had been twelve times to church with the watchman's daughter, and church had very much amazed him indeed. Polly Wynn had not attempted too much, and had left the church to speak for itself—Polly was waiting for her brother to take that little matter in hand, having no faith in her powers of conver-

sion, and great faith in her brother's. Polly would always be more of a friend than an adviser, she thought—she was only a child herself, with a father to look after her; and when Martin came from abroad—he had been sent abroad for a few weeks on special work, and had taken his daughter with him—he would be interested in little Zach also, she was certain, Martin being a philosopher as well as a marqueterie worker. Till then, let her be satisfied with a certain amount of progress in her protegée.

Presently would come home, too—there were rumours of her being already on her way—the woman for whom Polly was anxiously waiting; for whose sake, as well as Zach's, she had incurred the expense and responsibility of Zach's maintenance. She and her father had talked very often of this Mrs. Henwood—the sister of the woman who had died in Upper Ground Street—the woman whom Mr. Wynn had served faithfully for many years, and who had found a watchman's place for him, when he was fit for nothing else.

Father and daughter thought there was a chance for Zach, if Zach continued to improve until Mrs. Henwood's ship came home. And now almost

with every day there stole towards the light fresh traits of a new existence, and Mr. Wynn called particular attention to his prophecies concerning Zach, and how he had always said that this and that would be—which he never had said, by the way, although he believed implicitly in his present assertions.

Zach had shown an astonishing instance of forethought on the evening we take up his story again in detail. It was Saturday night; he had received his wages, paid over his three shillings, and was sitting in a heap on the hearthrug, in his favourite position, with his hands in his pockets, and his dark eyes staring at the fire. The watchman and Speck were ready to withdraw; it was eight in the evening, the hour for night duty—long hours of duty altogether on this occasion, lasting till six on the Monday morning, when business life began again—and Polly was looking up her market-basket previous to a shopping excursion.

"Didn't you say somethin' about a thimble, when you were rich, having a new silver one all to yourself, Polly?"

Master Fernwell had fallen into the habit of

calling Miss Wynn "Polly," after the watchman's fashion. He could not call her mother—Miss Wynn was too polite, and "mum" she objected to —Polly was suitable, he thought, after grave deliberation. Polly thought so also—it constituted him a brother at once—it was the home-title by which she had been known all her life, and if Zach could look upon her as his sister it would be all the better for his moral development. She did not like the idea of being a mother to him; she had no idea of her own age; her heart was young at two-and-thirty. There were times even when Polly almost fancied she was a little girl still, when her father warned her of the crossings, and advised her like one who was very ignorant of the world—and that was true enough in many respects.

"When business is brisker, Zach," she replied to Zach's question; "the last dress which I made isn't paid for yet."

"Well, there's the thimble."

And Zach drew it, enwrapped in pink paper, from his pocket, and held it towards her in an ungainly fashion, with his eyes still fixed upon the fire.

"Now, bless the boy—why, has he really!"

"I shan't want this week's bob, and I saved the rest," said Zach; "and they allowed me something for the old thimble."

"Thank you, Zach," said Polly; "you don't know how glad I am!"

"Yes, I do. You're fond of thimbles."

"I am glad, because you thought of me."

"And there was a hole in the t'other one—and you pricked your finger and made a fuss about it yesterday. I didn't much like going to the shop—and the coves behind the counter didn't much like the cut of me. I knows the looks of them coves, and what they think about us, and he wasn't to know that I was cock of the walk at Henwood's along with dad here."

"Guv'nor" had been replaced by "Dad," and home-names were coming with home thoughts. Youth in a pure atmosphere must change for the better, and Zach was changing now. Zach was in high spirits that night, too—the self-sacrifice had done him good, and he was pleased to see that his gift was appreciated.

Mr. Wynn condescended to pat him on the head before departure that night.

"You're a boy that will do me credit, Zach," he said. "I'm proud to think of the change in you. And you are not tired of us either—just as I thought."

"I'm getting used to everythink," said Zach; "but it was hard work at fust, and I so fond of cutting about where I liked, and dodging the perlice. I don't know," he added more thoughtfully, "but what I should like a barrow all to myself with oranges three a penny—the mouldy side down'ards, and one mouldy one in each lot—but still a reg'lar place in the winter aint a bad spec."

"And in the summer you'll be settled quite," said Polly, "and going to evening-school, then, learning your letters fast."

"I don't think I shall care about them letters much—father is full of letters enough for the lot on us. Teddy don't know his letters yet."

"But you must. Why, we're going to make a man of you from this night—are we not, father?" cried Polly.

Mr. Wynn was going out of the door.

"I hope so," he added more cautiously as he retired.

"Oh! I'm sure of it," said Polly, sanguinely;

"you'll be the man to take care of your old sister when you've got a house and home of your own —perhaps a big shop in Oakley Street, or Lower Marsh, if you keep honest, Zach, and work hard, and never be afraid of work. But how I am talking, to be sure, and all the marketing not done yet."

"I think I'll come with you to-night," suggested Zach.

"No—you mind house for me till I come back, and don't wear out your boots too soon. Shoe-leather costs a sight of money, and you must be more careful, boy. I'm not afraid of crowds—I shan't be long."

Polly departed, and Zach, with his eyes fixed on the fire, went off into reverie, long and deep, concerning his past, present, and future; concerning the money he had spent on the thimble, and Polly's thanks for it; whether he should be able to keep himself next week on "short commons," till Saturday night came round; and whether Polly would give him back the thimble, if he couldn't. Thinking seriously now, he could scarcely understand why he had run into Westminster Road, and bought a silver thimble—Polly could better afford to

buy things than he—he didn't owe them anything —and yet it had been "fun" to take them by surprise, and see them stare at him. He must have gone to sleep after all these thoughts, for he did not hear the door open, or become conscious of it remaining open, and a face—wild, white, and seamed—glaring at him through the aperture.

Not till a hand was laid upon his shoulder, did he start and look up, give a cry of surprise, and stagger to his feet, gasping with amazement,

"What, TEDDY!" he cried.

CHAPTER V.

"TEDDY."

THE new comer, who had surprised the dreamer by the fire, was a strange specimen of animated nature—strange enough, at times, to be looked after in the streets, and looking strange and more out of place in that room. A youth of fifteen years of age we know, or his face might have represented anything up to five-and-twenty years, and in its quiescent moments was old enough for any man's. A face slightly pock-marked, exceedingly dirty, lit up by two black eyes, larger than his brother's, and as full of restless fire as a wild beast's. What his nose was like it was difficult to determine, from a strip of sticking-plaster that covered that organ, and a part of his cheek; but his mouth was large and flexible, curling up at the corners somewhat, as if with an instinctive

sense of the humorous, difficult at all times to repress. Altogether, had it not been for the sticking-plaster, the restless nature of the eyes, and the dirty condition of the cheeks, it might have been termed a good-tempered face—a face to take to, under different circumstances, and in society that might be trusted. But it was no more a face to take to then, than Teddy was to be taken to and trusted for himself. It was the face of one who had seen the worst of life, mixed with it, and been part of it; stamped with the impudence common to such faces, and with the bravado which resists all that is true and higher than itself, and repels by some awful law all claim to alter it. Teddy was a large likeness of his brother Zach, as we saw him first, near a West End workhouse—not so shoeless, ragged and forlorn as Zach had been, but yet altogether presenting a picture as deplorable. Teddy possessed a hat, rather too large for him, a napless black hat, with the side stove in; one boot, and a shoe, the sole of the latter flapping with every tread; a corduroy jacket, somewhat more decent, and with less fringe about it than might have been expected; trousers to match his jacket, split across both knees; and a threadbare

waistcoat, from which protruded a brass tobacco box, and the stem of a short pipe.

"Well, young shaver," said Teddy, laying a hand upon each shoulder of his brother, and shaking him somewhat roughly in his clutch, "a nice young feller you, to cut your fam'ly c'nections in this here kind of way!"

"I couldn't help it, Teddy."

"Blest if a feller"—giving Zach another shake—"mightn't as well be without a brother! Blest if you're the feller, Zach, I took you for!"

"I'll tell you all about it, Teddy, in a jiffy. Don't keep shaking up a cove so. How did you find me out?"

"It wasn't werry hard work, considerin' the inquest and the noosepapers," said Teddy, relaxing his hold, and taking up his position with his back to the fire. "We read it all in print, the guv'nor did, leastways, and when we got to town it wasn't particlerly hard to find a scamp like you."

"Why didn't you come afore?"

"Because I was put in quod for fourteen days at Rochester—and the guv'nor was kind enuf to wait till I came out. I likes attention, Zach, and I thought it uncommon handsum of him."

Zach looked up sharply into his brother's dirty face.

"You're chaffing," he said quickly.

"Chaffing aint my forty, as the flash coves say," answered Teddy; "I aint been in chaffing humour lately. And so *she's* dead, Zach?"

"Yes—she's dead, Teddy."

Teddy looked at the patch-work rug on which his muddy boots were planted, looked up at the china tea-pot, the chimney ornament there, and critically examined it.

"Did *she* say anythink about me afore she died?" he asked.

"Not as I remembers."

"Not a word, Zach, I s'pose?"

"Not a word, I think. Why?"

"Why, because I thought she might; we had a jolly breeze, mother and me, afore she took you off with her, and I thought she might have said a somethink."

"A jolly breeze," said Zach; "oh! was there?"

Jolly breezes before the family separated, and mother and father took a child apiece, had not been unfrequent things to wonder at. Zach

knew the place by heart. He continued his conversation with his brother during his perambulations and inspections, asking for full particulars of the past year's history—how Zach had got on with his mother?—where he had fallen in luck's way, and where out of it?—what he was doing now?—how it had come to pass that strangers had given him shelter, and constituted that top room a home for him?—whether he didn't think it best to come back to Whitechapel and begin again, learning the new dodges of his particular profession, and becoming a comfort to his family? All these inquiries, and more, wandering about the room meanwhile, looking under the squab of the sofa-bedstead, into the cupboards by the fire-place; taking down the tea-caddy, and removing the lid for a more accurate scrutiny; shaking up the work-box, and a small mahogany box he had also discovered, and listening intently to the sounds elicited; opening the table drawer, and turning over its contents with a hasty hand; finally proceeding to the window, and looking down into the thick and hazy shadows of the lower world.

At the window, Zach joined him, and placed both hands on his arm.

"Teddy," he said, in a husky whisper, "I think I'll go back with you."

"Eh?" said Teddy, somewhat surprised; "so that's the game. Well, I thought you would—that's why I came."

"I can't take to 'em, Teddy," he continued in a more excited manner; "I can't grow good—it isn't as if I had your pluck, or was older, or anythink of that sort. It's a hard sort of game, and it don't come nat'ral to keep your fingers to yourself when there's a chance."

Teddy quite started, and looked down intently at his brother. Teddy was tall for his age, and Zach short for his, so the former could look down with impunity.

"That's true enuf," said Teddy.

"And they leave the things about so at the wharf—and in the stables, where the horse-cloths are—and in the counting-house, where they take such lots of money sometimes, Ted."

"Ah!" said Teddy, drawing in his breath, "such lots of money—lucky buffers them. I wish I had been 'prenticed to that perfession."

"You don't know what hard work it is to leave the things alone," said Zach, "to grow good!

You can't think, Teddy, how rum it feels to live with a couple of chaps, a man and a woman, who try to make you believe that you're getting better, and talk about what's right and proper—jest as if they knowed more than t'other people."

"It *must* feel rum," said Teddy; "go on. Who are they?"

"The man's a watchman at the wharf—he got a place for me as errand boy—and the woman's his daughter—I like *her* best. She knowed mother when mother was a lady."

"Ah! that's it—I've heard somethink of that—I know more about that than the guv'nor gives me credit for. And they've been nuts on you, then?"

"Yes."

"They think to bring you up 'spectable, and don't mind the trouble. Well, odd uns they air, and no gammon. They haven't heerd much on us, I should say, poor things! What's their names?"

"Wynn."

"Heads they lose, tails *you* win," said Teddy, half dreamily; "you've dropped into a queer crib, my boy."

"They takes us to church—they're going to make us read and write—isn't that a shame, Teddy?"

"It's like their imperence, for the guv'nor objects to that game—he says he never saw the good on it, and he ought to know best, because he's tried it. But what do they say about you at the counting-house, where the money rolls in, Zach?"

"I heard old Tinchester tell somebody that I was a sharp lad, and should get on if I kept straight."

"Ho! ho! kept straight, and we *will* grow crooked, the lot on us. We likes it, for it's nat'ral —we don't want any nails in us, to keep us 'gainst the wall—we've no friends, and don't want none —hooray, Zach, my boy! Let's cut!"

Zach seemed influenced by his brother's enthusiasm; his eyes sparkled, his breath came short. Here was quiet, monotonous every-day life—beyond was the glorious streets, wherein he would be free, and his own master! He was ready at once, when his elder brother paused once more.

"Hold hard! let's think of this agin," he said; "let's sit down by the fire, and think it over."

"She'll be back," said Zach.

"It don't much matter; she can't object to you

taking a walk with a brother you aint seen for a year a'most. We won't be in a hurry—there's nuffin to run for, and no perliceman arter us. Let's think it over—steady. Not what I want—not what you want—not what he wants—but what's best for little Zach here. Upon my soul, I——"

He stopped after that fierce exclamation, and when Zach asked him what he meant, he did not answer, but thrust his long fingers into his oakum-like hair, dropped his elbows on his knees, sat all of a heap on the chair recently occupied by Polly Wynn, and stared hard at the fire. Zach ventured to speak after a while, and the brother snapped him up with a "Don't bother;" and a second time, long afterwards, when the candle had burned low, and its wick was bent double like Teddy, again the "Don't bother, I tell you," was muttered peevishly.

The boy with the man's face—it might have been a man with the devil's face at that time—at last looked up, dark and ominous. He had thought it all over—coolly and deliberately he had weighed every chance for his brother and for himself, and he delivered his verdict with a lowering

brow. There was no sense of humour in the hard lines about the mouth at that time.

"It's no use stopping, Zach—they'll find you out, they'll find us all out, and you'll have to get away from here six months, twelve months arterwards, and *all that time lost!* I can't get on with the guv'nor by myself—we don't agree, and the three on us might; I could put up with a deal if you was with us—for I missed you, Zach, somehow—there, that's it; you and I did jog on well together, didn't we?"

"Ah! didn't we?"

"And it's no use you staying here to be set agin me—that's what it'll be, just as mother tried—won't it?"

"I don't know. I'm ready to go. It's like being in a *good station-house* here, where they look arter you just as much; but don't lock you up. I might have got used to it, if you hadn't——"

"Then you're sorry I've come."

"No—oh! so glad, Teddy! For I only wanted you to persuade me to go—you who know everythink."

"Everythink that's bad—ha! but why shouldn't I?" cried Teddy; "I don't believe there ever was

such a bad un—'cept the guv'nor, praps. Here, let's get out of this flash garret, you and me. We needn't—we *won't*, be beholden to good people for meat and drink when we can get it for ourselves—better than they can—quicker too, and nuffin to pay. Come on, Zach."

He pressed his arm through his brother's and assumed the burlesque vein, the pompous strut of one well to do in the world, and wishing the world to be aware of the fact. It was not pleasant acting at that time—it might have been better done, had Teddy's heart been more in the play; it was ended suddenly by the door opening, and by Polly Wynn, market-basket on arm, blocking up the aperture.

"Oh! lor'—who's this?"

Zach shrank back a step behind his brother—that brother who had always taken his part, and stood his friend before he was fool enough to go away from him! Why, Teddy had fought his father once to save him from blows—he should never forget that night!—and he would never desert Teddy again, if he would always take his part and stick up for him. Teddy would stick up for him now—for he could not face that little woman who had been kind to him, and whose

pitying interest had been so hard to bear!

"What do you want here?" asked Miss Wynn almost peremptorily.

"I've been sent to fetch my brother home. He's wanted," was the dogged answer.

"I can't part with him."

Teddy implied, by an expressive gesture, that it was absolutely necessary to take him away.

"And I shan't part with him. That's more!"

The little woman set her back against the door, and looked defiance to the death. Right and wrong—good and evil—stood face to face there, and paused.

CHAPTER VI.

A FAIR FIGHT.

TEDDY FERNWELL, as defender of his faith —his own dark faith in the power to do wrong—stood his ground well, though he did not admire the round little grey eyes that were fixed unflinchingly upon him. He could look people in the face for a longer time than most of his family, for he possessed a fair amount of nerves, and a fairer amount of impudence, but he rather objected to a steady conflict of eyes for all that. He looked away at last—a trifle away—at a knot in the panel over Polly Wynn's head. Polly saw her advantage, and began at once:

"You've no right to come into my house," she said.

"I'm going out of it—we're both going."

"It's an honest house."

"Well, you needn't be so proud of it—I s'pose

there's another somewhere about," was the defiant answer.

"It's a house that has sheltered your poor brother, and done him good, even in the little while he's been here. And now you come to do all the harm you can by tempting him away. Oh! how I wish Martin was back!"

"Zach's my brother. Zach's tired of this game."

"Oh! don't say so, Zach!" cried Polly Wynn, setting her basket on an adjacent chair, in order to wring her hands together, "don't turn away from us—you, so young, so likely to do better away from all of them. Boy, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," she added, turning indignantly on Teddy who went back a step or two at her vehemence, "to try and rob him of the only chance that he will have."

"It's waste of time, mum," said Teddy; "it's born in us to be bad—we're the baddest family that ever was knocked together. Zach won't do you credit—it isn't as if he was a soft boy—or as if he wanted to stop werry much, and throw the lot of us overboard. If he wanted to do that—why, then, I shouldn't ride rusty; but knowing his belikings,

and being, as it was, his nat'ral purtecter, why I take his part—just as I used to when father whopped him for making faces at him."

"He always took your part, Zach," said Polly, appealing to her protegée at this.

"Allers," said Zach, in somewhat of an ashamed tone—"I don't know how I should have got on if he hadn't. I've told you, mum, what a chap he was to get me out of scrapes."

"You love your brother?" asked Polly, veering rapidly to Teddy, seeing her advantage in the argument, and seizing it with all a woman's shrewdness.

"Eh?" said Teddy.

Polly repeated her question, and Teddy laughed ironically. Love was a funny word—he did not know if he had ever heard the word before; it jarred and jangled unpleasantly, and yet made him laugh. He had been a strong, robust, iron kind of boy, and Zach, in earlier days, had been a weak fledgling. Mr. Fernwell had been ready with his fists, his elbows, and his feet, and had been partial in early days to "dropping on" poor Zach; and Teddy, without much thought of his motives, had been in the habit of diverting

attention from Zach, and coming in for his sire's superfluous energy. Teddy did not like to see Zach knocked about unmercifully, although Zach had always been a trifle aggravating, and knocks did not hurt him—the mediator. So he ran in and took his share, and gave interest for the same as he grew bigger, stronger, and more hard. This he called taking Zach's part—not loving Zach. What did he know of love, or what it meant?—he did not believe that he loved anybody, and as for anybody loving him, why, he had never expected such a thing. Therefore he laughed ironically, and replied ironically also,

"Oh! I just do love Zach, and he loves me, and we both love the guv'nor uncommon. You should see us of a Sunday in our shay cart, all with roses in our button-holes, father driving, and Zach and I on his knees, with our arms round his neck. Such a picter, mum!"

"You're fond of pictures, then?" said little Polly.

She was put out by Teddy's irony, but she had a battle to fight, and her heart was in her work, for she was an earnest and good woman.

"Yes," said Teddy, dubiously.

"I'll show you two in him," pointing to Zach, who winced at her outstretched finger, and shut his eyes away from it; "if he goes with you, look at him—going away to his old life, to the life that yours has been, growing worse and worse with every year, from prison to prison, earning a worse name in each—coming to the gallows, p'r'aps, just as his mother feared, and prayed against, and all your fault—all your doing, Teddy Fernwell!"

Teddy's large eyes were distended at the speaker's warmth; he had not met a woman like this before; he did not know what to make of her, or what to say. "All his doing," she told him, just as if he had not done mischief enough for himself!

"It's the worst of lives—it can't be worse—and you take Zach to it, when he might grow better. Here's the other picture—let me breathe a bit. I'm not a learned woman—I'm not handy at words, like my brother is—let me take a breath."

She jerked her bonnet-strings away from her throat, and went on again.

"And here's the other picture, Teddy—of him."

She pointed Zach out again, who started, and closed his eyes a second time.

"A boy in the place where he's already trusted, growing up, and being trusted more, getting a place better and better, holding his head up, with people round him who are glad to see him prosper, and who thank God for it. With a home of his own, and a comfortable wife, p'r'aps, and dear little children being brought up to love him too, and to be proud of their father, who worked his way from nothing by his trust in One, who told him that the honest means were best and surest. I see all this so plain, if you don't step between, and ruin him—if you don't rob him of his chances."

Teddy scratched his head with both hands, stood holding his temples with both hands, and staring hard at the floor. He was amazed—wonderfully amazed—and the shock had been too much for him. In all his life—his fourteen years of evil, that were equal to half a dozen lives of many men—he had never heard words of comfort for himself, or for those belonging to him. He was very bad, but he was better than he believed; with half a chance offered to him years since, he

would have been a different being; for there had been evidence of good in him, which, developed by a careful hand, might have borne fair fruit in time. No one had taken interest in him—encouragement to do wrong had been offered, nothing else—and he was of the wolf tribe rather than of humankind now.

Still he was baffled and bewildered. The woman's words *hurt* him, as though they had been made of iron, and hurled at his obduracy; the picture—that last picture—was an affront to one shut out from its fair landscape, and yet he did not feel a wish to resent its obtrusion on his wretchedness. He had fallen into strange company, and the sooner he was gone the better—gone without little Zach, whom he had come to fetch away.

He was sullen over his defeat, yet—even in a war of words, he did not care to be beaten. In this new world he lost his old bravado, his insolence of gesture and quickness at retort, that sharpness of the streets for which he was already famous, Whitechapel-way. In his turn he could have overwhelmed her with his *argôt*—his slang invective, that had made him famous with his own set, but would have been Greek or Hebrew to Polly

Wynn. But he was humiliated—cowed; and, above all, there was a strange unaccountable fluttering at his heart, that rendered him unlike himself, and kept him looking down as though afraid of her. He should be very glad to get away.

"Zach," he whispered, "you'd better stay."

"That's well—that's well!" cried Polly, clapping her hands in enthusiasm. "You're not so bad to say that. Why, there's hope for you, if you wish him a better life than yours!"

"I can't wish him a wus at any rate," said Teddy sharply. "Zach," he added, turning to his brother, "*she's* right. Try your luck here, and keep quiet—you may turn out all she says, if you keep your mouth shut about *us*. You're in a place—that's a start off which I never got—which I never tried to get," it was a sad laugh at this juncture; "and arter all, to come back with me isn't much use now. I'm hard up, and the guv'nor will be; and why I wanted you back, I don't know. It warn't kind, jiggered if it was! You stop."

"If I only thought that I should get on," said Zach ruefully. "Oh! if I liked work a little better!"

"One work is so slow—so hard for the likes of

us, always moving here and there, mum," explained Teddy to Miss Wynn; "it's a complaint we tramps get."

"Oh! is it?—poor things!" said Polly.

"It's life we see," Teddy continued to explain; "here and everywhere—fairs, races, fires, theyaters, Lord Mayor's shows, and fights; but Zach's younger, he'll get over it—he'll put up with work. Stop here, young feller—and try a change. Why, it was only my larks, pretending to take you away—I never meant it."

"Yes, you did," was the reply to this.

"And you never meant to go with me—why, I aint got a lodging anywhere, and shall have to knock about all night at *the old game.* Stop here," he reiterated, "and learn manners, and get a cut above us all, and leave *him* and me on the prowl —just as we used—just as we shall be, keeping the ball a rolling to the gallows as you say, mum."

"But you—why, a boy, too—may——" began Polly.

"May do wonders," he interrupted. "I'd rayther not hear anythink about myself—I've heard enough to bust me about him! I don't make it all out—

I shan't try—I don't care—don't want. Stop here, Zach, and never think on me any more—never any more, young feller!"

"You'll come and see us. Oh! he may come and see us, Polly, now and then," said Zach; "he's a good sort, when you know him, Teddy is—everybody likes Teddy."

"If he don't come to tempt you—now and then, he may call," Polly said, with a little natural hesitation.

"Thankee," said Teddy dropping into the sullen mood again, and moving towards the door. He looked back at Zach, and said once more,

"Stop here, and try your luck. Stop with *her*, Zach—mind you try and stop till I come agin."

"All right. I'll stop," said Zach with greater confidence.

Teddy went down stairs, followed by Polly, who was resolved to see him safely out of the house. He had expected her descent with him, and was waiting for her on the doorstep. He turned upon her with a fierceness for which she was unprepared, and caught her by the wrist in a vice-like grip that drew from her a stifled cry.

"You know what you've been and done—what you're going to do?"

"To try and save one soul from the devil—for the sake of her who was once my mistress—for the sake of himself, too, poor fellow—and for the sake of God, most of all."

"I don't know that lingo—church lingo's a cut above me. But you're a going to set Zach aginst us."

"No—not that."

"Away from us—it's all the same. Well, that Zach—that boy upstairs, is the only cove who ever took a fancy to me in any way whatsumever—and he was a rum little chap hisself, and I liked him more nor I can tell you. We were like a couple of puppies brought up together, missus, till the old woman parted us. And I shan't see the little beggar agin—never!"

"Never!"

"No—that's wot it's come to—for I can't come to this place, and he mustn't come to ours, and so he's like a dead Zach. Well, so much the better—who's a grieving over it—I aint!"

"You're an odd boy," said Polly reflectively; "you're harder to make out than your brother."

"I don't ax you to try—nobody axed you to try," said Teddy; "you've no right to come a-trying to make coves good who don't want to, mind."

"Yes, I have," said Polly quietly.

"You've no right to make Zach one, or to go and tell me that I was a-robbing him of his chance —what did you say that for?"

"You would have taken him away just as he was turning a better boy."

"I aint took him—I aint took nothin'. I aint sorry that he aint coming back. He's a sharp little chap, and it will be a lark to see him growing up 'spectable—my eye!"

"Good night," said Polly; "try and grow better yourself to keep him company. Try and think that it isn't such very hard work to turn away from evil."

"Ah! it won't fit with me," said Teddy ironically; "that game can't answer with us old uns. Lor' bless you! I've heerd lots of preaching down our street; there's a cove comes there, and stands upon a stool, and bawls his head arf off, and swears at us, and sings Sunday tunes—but it don't do!"

"Ah! it don't do good to you, you mean?"

"You should hear the guv'nor take him off when he's in good sperrits—you wouldn't know one from t'other."

"Good night, Teddy. And you—you won't come too often?" she added, quite nervously.

"Oh! you don't want me to grow good, then, by coming here?" was the quick answer.

"God forgive me! but I am more afraid of the harm you'll do to Zach, than hopeful of any good in you. You are so hard—so hard! But come if you like—it may help you to a better thought or two—come and see us when my dear brother is back again from France."

"I shan't come no more," said Teddy, becoming suddenly fierce again; "you keep your dear brother all to yourself as well as mine, old gal. Here!"

He extended his hand towards her so suddenly, that she started back as from a blow aimed at her. Teddy's was a galvanic action in a soulless body almost, and was without grace in consequence.

"What is it?" asked Polly.

"You left it about," he said harshly; "you shouldn't leave things about when people comes here—people like me!"

"My thimble—Zach's present!" exclaimed Polly in amazement.

"You shouldn't leave silver things about," again reprimanded Teddy. "I picks up silver things when I can—anywhere, and it doesn't matter whose."

"I put it in the tea-pot," said Polly in defence, and still struggling with her amazement.

"Lock it up another time."

These were Teddy's last words—his last advice. He thrust both hands into his pockets, and walked away down the muddy street, taking immense strides, and so vanishing away speedily into the outer darkness, wherein it seemed more natural for such as he to exist. Turning the corner of the first street, Teddy's pace was altered, and he dropped into a loose, slouching kind of tramp, keeping always to the house walls, and the shadows that lurked there. At the corner of Stamford Street he paused again, shook himself like a dog, and appeared to deliberate as to his future course; finally slouching on once more in the direction of the Waterloo Road. Before the terminus of the South Western Railway he stopped to think again, to watch the people who went in and out

there, with a lynx-like gaze, that told of "the business" to which the devil had apprenticed him. He moved on, however, after awhile, as though business was unprofitable that evening, crossed the Lower March, looked in through the gin-shop doors at the revellers pouring their Saturday's wages down their throats as rapidly as possible, mixed with the crowds of people marketing, stopped with a hundred loiterers to hear a nautical song yelled forth by a man on wooden legs —a man who had fought with Nelson, according to the plaster on his chest, and a man who knew Teddy, and winked at him in quiet recognition.

Suddenly Teddy backed out of the crowd, and took up his position against the nearest lamp-post, facing a fancy clothier's, where waistcoats of gorgeous hues were to be had for two-and-ninepence, and were hanging in rows along the front of the house, as if in mimicry of next door's Ostend rabbits, arranged in similar fashion from iron supports of the shop blind, and catching the hats of passers-by occasionally. Here Teddy went into deeper thought than ever—far away thoughts, that would have held him spell-bound for a longer period, had

not the clothier's young man—a youth with a hooked nose and the slobbery accent peculiar to Hebrews—suggested that he knew what he was standing there for, and that he'd better be off before the next policeman came. Teddy made a wry face and retired. His thoughts had been disturbed, but they seemed to give birth to action. He crossed into the road, and began to run along the Marsh, into the Waterloo Road, back to Stamford Street and Upper Ground Street. He passed the house where he had parted with his brother—it was not there that he intended to call, at least; he went on to the great archway, beneath which his mother had died, and rung the bell at the side of the gates, on which the name of Henwood was inscribed.

Here he waited patiently, till the feet of Mr. Wynn, watchman for the night, were heard advancing, till the trap in the gates was opened a little way, and the head of Mr. Wynn, looking more Punch-like with cold and blueness, peered through at him.

"What is it?"

"I'm Zach's brother—I want to speak to you."

"Oh! dear, are you?—what, another of you?—what's the matter?"

"I've been to see Zach—he's going to grow up good, he says—he's going to try, at all events, and the woman there will help him."

"She's a good girl—no one will know it better than Zach some day."

"I've come to ax you to get away from here—to change your lodging, and not tell anyone where you've gone to—not any one, or he'll find you out."

"Who'll find me out, did you say?"

"My father, who wants Zach home—don't you see?" he added, becoming peevish at Mr. Wynn's obtuseness; "you must get away altogether. Can't they make you watchman somewhere else? Down by the Docks there, at the t'other place?"

"Why, how did you know anything about a t'other place?"

"I knows a lot of things—you'll move?"

"I can't move away from my night's work."

"Then move your room, guv'nor—try that. He don't know anythink about you yet, but he's as downy as the devil hisself, and I shan't be able to keep him off the scent long, if he wants the kid."

"Are you Teddy?"

"I'm the bad un that stopped with father—Zach's the good un that went away on the quiet with his mother. Ah! take a good squint at us, old man, you won't see such a fine sort every day."

Mr. Wynn had held his lantern close to the trap, and the lad, who observed everything, had rather objected to this curiosity. It was against Teddy's business, too, to be well known—an insult to his profession to look at him too hard.

"You needn't be so imperent, boy," reproved Mr. Wynn.

"You needn't look at me," said Teddy, in reply—"you'll never see me no more. I'm going to leave the lot of you to yourselves, and give Zach his chance to grow 'spectable. I shall walk the guv'nor out of town agin as soon as I can, and we shan't be heerd on unless the noosepapers takes liberties with our names. You'll move your crib, now, won't you?"

"I'll consider of it; but I can't see what good it can do."

"And—oh! I'd somethink else to tell you, only your dog keeps a-barking and a-barking, and mak-

ing me forget things—and you won't be down upon Zach too much, or leave things in his way jest yet, and he'll get on, and grow up a credit to you. He's not like me, you know; he's two years younger; don't be down upon him first go off, but let that little woman talk to him, jest as she did to me. I've been a-thinking of Zach, oh! ever so long now; and she's right, lor' bless you! that little woman's as right as ninepence. I never seed anyone like her before, and Zach's a young un and not hard as nails, like me. That's all—shut up, old boy."

Teddy moved on suddenly; and the watchman leaned forwards and looked after him, scarcely able to comprehend why his night-watch had been thus unceremoniously disturbed. He was disturbed himself, too, by this apparition—this second Fernwell who had called to offer him advice. He looked after Teddy, till the angle of the wall shut him from view, and then he closed the trap for the night again, and proceeded to reflect upon the advice that had been proffered him.

Meanwhile Teddy had paused before the house, to look up at the lighted window of the room wherein he had surprised his brother. The hour

was growing late now, but Teddy was in no hurry to proceed homewards. He stood with his back to the wall, his hands in his pockets still, his eyes fixed upwards at the window blind, very rigid, very watchful, very full of thought. This was a matter for wonderment, for Teddy was not a thoughtful youth. He had never given a thought beyond the passing hour, and those who were to be duped therein, those respectable members of society with whom he was at war. Was he thinking of Zach's chance, and wondering why it had come, or what would follow it; contrasting Zach's future with his own; seeing again, as if by magic, he and his brother the central figures in those pictures which Polly Wynn had drawn for him? He was unsettled and unlike himself that night. He knew it, too, for he shook himself in his old dog-like fashion, and muttering "This won't do!" went on again to that darker, denser world, whence his brother Zach had issued.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PASSENGERS BY THE BOULOGNE BOAT.

A FEW weeks after the visit of Teddy Fernwell to Upper Ground Street, that fast and favourite screw-steamer, the *Ariadne*, left Boulogne Harbour for Folkestone—left under favourable circumstances on the finest day for crossing the Channel that had been seen that year; with a blue sky overhead, a sea comparatively smooth, a breeze that was only fresh and invigorating, and seemed scarcely capable of giving an extra curve to the waves at play that morning. It was a morning for which one passenger, at least, had waited anxiously, looking out from the hotel windows every-day, and taking the long succession of "nor'-easters" as an affront to herself—a plot between "mine host" and the elements, to detain her in that musty-smelling hotel, where business was not over-brisk at that time.

The lady who waited for fine weather, and who would have waited all the days of her life rather than have had foul weather for her homeward journey, took her place on board the *Ariadne* with much pomp of circumstance, attended by "mine host" to the last, and by a crowd of supernumerary *garçons*, including the closely-cropped, clean-shaven young man who had been sent to the end of the pier twice a day for the last six weeks, to note how things looked out at sea, and who hated the sea, and had grown bilious watching it for Madame.

The sea, at last, was peaceable, and Madame was on ship-board; wrapped in sables, heaped in shawls, with the crown of a girlish hat visible above the pile of costly material in which she was enshrined. Her servants—her own servants—were about her rendering her comfortable, long after the steam-packet had sailed away from La Belle France. There was one red-nosed woman arranging a small portmanteau for her feet: and another, with a blue nose, pinched with cold, tucking in the shawl again; and a third maiden, very prim and angular, at a respectful distance on the seat, ready for any orders that might be given

her, and evidently feeling "qualmish," despite the fineness of the weather; and there was a fourth lady, a nursery governess, in charge of a pale-faced girl of twelve years old, also at a respectful distance opposite, but watchful for orders, either from mother or child, and knowing her duty, and feeling "qualmish" also—just a little—and hoping that the orders would come before she felt too indisposed to attend to them.

There were not many passengers, outward or homeward bound that day. A few gentlemen of commercial aspect, all in waterproof or heavy cloaks, as though they had less confidence in the weather than Madame; a stout old gentleman, whom it was whispered was a real lord, accompanied by a real lady, who had gone below for warmth and comfort; a handful of French and German nondescripts in search of pleasure—in search of orders for brandies and kid gloves—in search of higher wages in perfidious Albion; a few more ladies, who were below deck; a tall, good-looking, but swarthy Englishman, with red and nubbly hands that scorned gloves, or had been ungloved for a better hold of another child of twelve years old, pretty and rosy-cheeked, and al-

together worth admiring, who sat on his knee and looked at the swirl of water struggling with the paddle-wheel.

The man with the child had chosen that end of the boat whither the *élite* of the travellers had congregated; and as the passengers settled into shape and something like quiescence, it might have been observed that the lady in the cloaks, and shawls, and sables, looked more than once intently at the child a little way apart from her, and seemed to contrast it with her own pale-faced and passive daughter. The children were certainly a contrast —one all life and health, interested in everything about her, and anxious for full explanations; the other staring straight a-head, with a look expressive of no interest in anything.

The face of the lady who had waited long, if not patiently, for fine weather, emerged now from its surroundings, and was turned right, then left.

"The boat rocks very much, Simkins," she said to attendant number one, as though it was Simkins' fault, and therefore to be remarked at once, and put a stop to.

"Yes, ma'am; it's not so steady as I thought it would be. Might I suggest that the rest of the

ladies are in the cabin, and that you might not feel the rocking there?"

"Suggest what you please, Simkins, only do not expect me to follow your suggestions. Why have I been wishing for a fine day, but that I might remain on deck, and not add to the unpleasantness of this sea-voyage? What have I got a fine day for?" she asked, as though it had been booked expressly for her, along with the places for herself and *cortége*.

"Quite true, ma'am," said Simkins, subsiding into herself after this reproof.

"Drewitt," the lady said to attendant No. 2, "my smelling-salts. Drewitt," she added after the smelling-salts were in her daintily-gloved hand, "I should like to see the captain—ask him to be kind enough to step this way?"

Drewitt departed on that especial errand and returned looking somewhat discomfited.

"The captain's very busy just now, madam, and cannot leave the paddle-box."

"I don't see anything to make him busy," she answered, querulously.

Madam retired into her surroundings again, leaving a long sharp nose and a pair of little

brown eyes visible above the upper stratum of Cashmere. It might have been observed that the light brown eyes turned again more than once in the direction of the man and child, as though their presence before her was an attraction, despite of herself. The child had grown tired of her survey of the paddle-wheels by this time, and was listening to a story of her father's—listening intently, and laughing also, fair evidence of the sire being a good story-teller. The lady condescended to think of the difference between her own child and the child before her—both of the same age, both fair-haired girls, one full of life, and the other to all appearance almost weary of it already—one with rosy cheeks, and the other white as marble. She had not observed so great a difference before—her Lettice she had fancied was a delicate, but an excessively genteel child, until the daughter of that strange, red-handed, swarthy man presented herself, the picture of health, before her. And yet she was positive that not half the care had been bestowed upon the little stranger as upon Lettice—not half the watch kept over her, not one hundredth part of the money lavished on her. The father was evidently a working man—a su-

perior mechanic, perhaps a foreman somewhere—and no doubt neglected his children, after the fashion of such people! Possibly the air had something to do with the contrast, for a sea voyage did not agree with Lettice any more than with her mother, let them wait never so long for fine weather. Lettice was turning green, she was sure of it—it was all the nasty boat, which might have rocked less, she was certain, if the captain had only taken more care; but when did captains of vessels consider the feelings of the passengers? The lady was very cold, but she would not venture into the cabin—she knew what cabins were like in the best of times, and it was better to sit in the fresh air and shiver. She had been advised not to go below by the last physician whom she had consulted at Boulogne, and she had not paid a heavy fee for nothing—that was not her way! She was vexed very much at the rocking of the boat, and surprised not a little at the sailors coming up in waterproof coats and coal-heaver's hats; the sun was bright enough, they would be on English ground in an hour and a half, and though the wind blew sharply across the sea now, it remained still the fine day for which she had bargained.

Thinking of these things—of little else, for she was a lady who took no great degree of interest in matters not affecting her own welfare, it may be premised—she had forgotten to observe her fellow-passengers for awhile. Waking suddenly to consciousness of outward things, her head came completely out of her wrappings, like the head of a Jack-in-the-box, in her new amazement. It had been a handsome head once, with youth, and youth's freshness to tone the sharpness of the features; but the good looks had almost vanished with her five-and-thirty years, and the face was already pinched and angular—a hatchet kind of face, to which a dab of rouge on either cheek brought back few signs of juvenescence. No rosy bloom, no pearl powder, no side curls from Paris—where they are great in side curls—no gipsy hat, with white feather, cocked upon the head, could make that lady a year younger in appearance—she was unquestionably five-and-thirty years of age—going on for forty rapidly; and had she branded that fact upon her forehead, it could not have been more readily apparent. She was not aware of it herself, for riches had brought her the usual tribes of flatterers

and toadies, and were not the maids paid handsomely to make themselves agreeable? She had improved her appearance by this making up, however, for shorn of these decorations she looked ten years more than her natural age, her maids whispered to each other, and it was scarcely a face to love or take to when the foreign bloom was brushed away from it.

That face expressed amazement, then—amazement verging upon horror. The child whom she had envied for her bright looks and happy face had stolen to the side of her daughter, and both of them were actually in conversation! That was the governess's fault—the governess who had suddenly made a dash for the cabin, with a white handkerchief to her mouth, and left an under-nurse to the charge of such a child as hers!

"Lettice!" she cried, sharply; but Lettice was betraying a little interest for once, and the voice of the mother passed unheeded, and was carried out to sea by the wind. The lady became animated, and even excited; she looked round for Simkins, who was sitting with closed eyes, and hands upon her chest, trying not to believe she was at sea; she looked for Drewitt, but Drewitt was

not to be perceived anywhere, and had already preceded the governess below; whilst the fourth of the staff was flirting with the steward's boy behind the funnel.

"Simkins!" she cried more sharply still; but Simkins was deaf, or asleep, or reckless of the consequences of disobedience to orders, and no heed was paid to the old familiar tones.

The lady became more excited, and would have struggled from her wrappings, had she not been too carefully wound up, mummy-fashion, by her late attendants. Only one arm managed to free itself and beckon towards the daughter, who was becoming more animated every instant, and who would not see her; she was sure that it was intentional perverseness on the part of Lettice.

The lady turned to the man at last, sitting with his nubbly hands upon his knees, watching the two children intently.

"Sir—you, sir!" she cried, "take your child away, if you please, from mine."

"Has yours got anything catching, then?" cried the man addressed, springing to his feet with alacrity. "What's—what's the matter with her?"

"I do not allow my daughter to converse with

strangers," said the lady hurriedly and even warmly. "You will oblige me by——"

"Oh, let them talk, madam," said the father, taking his seat by the lady's side to her further consternation; "it will do them both good. I always like to see children friendly towards each other. It will be time enough for ceremony when they've long skirts, and are better up in the 'proprieties.' If you hammer into your girl's head a heap of stuck-up nonsense at her age, she'll be a nuisance, even to you, when she grows older. You'll excuse me speaking frankly. I have a bad habit of speaking out, my friends say. I tell them, it's the best habit that I've got."

The lady would have withdrawn herself from this rude being without a word, had the power been in her hands; she was shocked at his want of ceremony, his impertinence in addressing her. He should have known better; he should have been able to see with a glance their immense difference in position, and to have been awed by it, as the world in general was awed, or where would have been the satisfaction of her high estate? But he spoke as to an equal, and if not intentionally rude, still there was no more excuse for

his abstruseness than for his intrusion. If those wretches had not fastened her down so tightly! What ever had they done to the wrappers and shawls, she wondered!

"There are times for speaking out, and times when it is common courtesy to be silent," replied the lady after a second ineffectual effort to free herself from her trappings.

She could not escape from the man—she would, therefore, wither him up with her disdain. She looked him in the face whilst she addressed him, but he did not flinch. It was a fine manly face, lit up with two large brown eyes, and set off by a bushy pair of brown whiskers; somewhat of a large face, with a smile that seemed natural to it, and might have won upon softer hearts than the lady's, and yet a smile that did not detract from an intentness or an earnestness of expression natural to it also. Evidently the face of a good-tempered man, but none the less objectionable to her. Of the two, she preferred a sour face; it was more classical, and looked at life less frivolously. As for this face, she would have liked to strike it with her parasol, for its obtrusiveness—its want of reverence for her.

"I wouldn't lose my temper, madam, or feel hurt because my girl and yours have exchanged a few words," he said more gravely; "mine may do yours a wonderful deal of good, for she's the best girl in the world, I think. Upon my honour, I don't believe there's such another."

"Indeed!" said the lady drily.

"One thing worries me; but I think each child has a certain fault, failing, or something to worry its father or mother through life."

The lady started, and looked at the speaker once more. Those last words had struck home, for they affected her case somewhat. In her life —in the short life of her daughter Lettice—there had been much to worry her, and this man seemed to guess it. He made her curious to hear more; and in her curiosity she forgot that Lettice was still talking to the little stranger.

"What fault has your girl, may I ask—boldness?"

Curious as she was, she could not refrain from launching a little arrow with her inquiry, but the arrow never took effect, which was aggravating.

"I did not say that Christie had a fault," he corrected; "but there's a something in her, ma-

dam, that keeps me anxious concerning her. She's rather an old sort of child, you see."

"How should I see?" said the lady, taking up his phrase.

"You would see if you had the pleasure of her acquaintance," said the father; "which you have not, and are never likely to have—so much the worse for you. But my Christie is too old for her years, try all I can to alter it, and make myself younger in thought and action than I really am—to become her playfellow, even, when there's an hour to spare. I find her all the playmates that I can—for I never lose an opportunity of launching her into child's society, abroad or at home. At home you see—you would see," he corrected this time, "that she has begun housekeeping early, and is my little housekeeper as well as daughter—clever in her way, quick at accounts, brisk and business-like enough for twice her age. So with a woman's work before her, she grows too woman-like occasionally, though I fight hard to keep her still a child. The longer a girl remains a child, the better, I think."

"You are a deep thinker, it appears," said the lady, listlessly.

"I have time to think—and my work gives me the chance," he answered.

"You *are* a workman, then?"

"Oh! yes. What did you fancy I was?"

"I did not fancy anything about you."

"You seemed surprised."

"Not at all," she answered, peevishly.

"Oh! yes, you did," he re-asserted; "and I don't see why you should be ashamed to own it, any more than I should be ashamed of my craft. It's rather odd," he added again, "that you and I should become so friendly all of a sudden."

"You have forced your conversation upon me, and I have been unable to escape it, sir," said the lady, suddenly putting on her most dignified demeanour; "you have forgotton your own position in life, and what is due to *me!* Oblige me by taking yourself and daughter as far from us as possible—that will be some apology for this intrusion."

She found her smelling-salts, and sought consolation from them on the spot. To think that a workman—a common workman—should dare to address her, crossing from Boulogne to Folkestone. And not even a French workman, who would have

called her "Madame," and stood with his cap raised from his head, the very picture of humility; but an English workman, who might be going up a ladder to-morrow with a hod of bricks on his shoulder! She was not able to forgive herself for having addressed a word to him; it was unlike her usual manner, and it was quite time—more than quite time—to stand upon that dignity which had carried her so well through life, and—won so little love towards her!

But then there was no shaking this man off—he *would* talk, and he would start such extraordinary topics. He was actually beginning again, looking quite gravely at her, as though she were an object of pity as well as interest to him.

"I am sorry if I have hurt your feelings," he said; "I don't regard position much myself—and I am never awed by other people's! *But*," he said, with emphasis, "I am more sorry—fifty times more sorry—to see a woman of your years——"

"My goodness!" ejaculated the mummy.

"A woman of your years," he repeated, "taking to yourself credit for the wealth that has been made for you, found for you, or bequeathed to you—that is something to be sorry for! It is

not excusable in a man, who may have hewn out his own fortune—but in a woman, to whom we look for excellence, it is almost unpardonable. Why, you read your Bible, surely?"

"If you—if you don't go, I shall be obliged to call for assistance to remove you. How dare you behave like this to me, and talk to me about my Bible? Where's Simkins?—where's Drewitt?—Lettice, come here!"

Lettice advanced at last across the deck towards her mother, and received a sudden shaking from the hand that had released itself at an earlier period. The workman doubtful yet where he had given offence, and puzzled by the lady's pride as she had been puzzled by his brusqueness, walked away with Christie—walked up and down the deck to keep the blood in circulation. The passengers were nearly all below stairs—the sun had disappeared behind a pile of vapoury cloud, that seemed very rapidly increasing in density; the wind made a dismal whistling amongst the rigging, and the ship began to dance quite ominously. Suddenly the stewardess, with a bonnet on, and two hands to her bonnet, made a dash from the cabin to the deck, and approached the

lady who had been grievously offended, and who was flushed in the face still with indignation.

"Don't you think, ma'am, that it would be better to come downstairs?" she suggested.

"When shall we reach Folkestone?"

"In an hour and a half, ma'am."

"Then you'll be behind time?"

"Yes—the wind is against us."

"That's no business of mine," snapped the lady, "and you have no business to put down one time in your bills and mean another. How am I to reach London, do you think, in time for dinner?"

The stewardess had evidently not given much thought to that important part of the passenger's duties. She looked a little dismayed at the lady's fierceness, and took refuge in her old advice, that the cabin was the best place for the fair sex at that period.

"I shall stay here," said the lady, firmly. "I was told that it would be a fine day for crossing the Channel, and if you've all deceived me, you must take the consequences."

"Very well, ma'am," said the stewardess, demurely.

"And where are all my servants? I insist upon

my servants coming up, and Miss Lettice's governess coming up too. Why are we left alone here to be insulted by strange people, I should like to know? Where are they all?"

"If you please, they're very sick, ma'am—dreadfully sick!"

"What, all of them?"

"Yes, ma'am, all!"

"Then they have no right to be so inconsiderate," asserted the lady. "Tell them I insist upon being attended to, at once. My daughter and I can't be left here alone, exposed to the insults of every rude creature on board."

"If any one has insulted——"

"Will you deliver my message to the servant, or must I take it myself?" demanded the lady, at this juncture.

The stewardess hesitated, evidently seemed inclined to deliver a small piece of her mind, by way of return for all this contumely, thought better of her inclination, and flounced down the stairs of the lady's cabin, to detail her grievances to any one disposed to hear them. Meanwhile the decks were almost clear of passengers; the dealers in kid gloves and brandies had vanished with the sun, the

commercial men bound homeward and outwards the gentry, coming back in haste for "the season," had all quitted the deck, leaving it to the sailors, and those eccentric people to whom we have especially directed our readers' attention.

"I think that you had better go down-stairs, Christie," said the father; "we shall have the sea over here presently, and then you'll have all these fine things wet."

"The wet don't hurt them, father," said the child. "I would rather stop here with you—you'll be so dull without me."

"Why, that's a good joke, Chris!" and the sturdy father held his daughter for an instant at arm's length, and laughed at her.

"You're always dull without me, though you don't say so," said Christie. "Why, what would you have done in Paris with no daughter to take care of you as usual?"

"Ah! I don't know!" said the other, "and not knowing accounts for my making a traveller of you, my girl. What a heap of news for grandpa and aunt Polly, Christie."

"Yes, indeed! And news to hear too."

"To be sure! You must tell them of the little

girl whom you have met to-day—the first real lady of your acquaintance, Christie."

"Is she a real young lady?"

"Quite real," said the other, drily. "What do you think of her?"

"She's very old-fashioned, father!"

"That's a good joke!—that's the best of jokes!" laughed Mr. Martin Wynn—for we need make no secret of that gentleman's name.

"She talks like a little woman who has seen the world, father," said Christie; "talks about her wardrobe, and her jewel-box, and her mother's new house at Wimbledon, that she has not seen yet, and the years that she has been in Paris, until she has forgotten what England is like. Talks without smiling—*so!*"

And Christie Wynn pursed her lips together, and spoke through them in an indistinct fashion.

"That'll do, Chris," said Mr. Wynn; "we call that taking people off, and it is a bad habit to grow upon you—drop that as soon as you like, my dear. Laugh with everybody, but *at* no one, and so through life with no one to hate us for our bad opinion. Were you very much afraid when you heard how grand the young lady was?"

"Not at all."

"Nor I of the mother—she's rather a Tartar, though," he added, in a lower tone, "and must have found it precious hard to carry that pride—all that big lump of pride—through life with her. How it must have got in her own way, as well as in other people's, poor woman!"

Meanwhile the poor woman had found means to disinter one attendant from the bowels of the ship—the much-abused Simkins again, now of a pale green tint, with yellow eyes. Simkins was sick, and on the verge of opposition to all sublunary mandates; it had been a struggle to leave the cabin, and toil up-stairs to receive her mistress's scolding; she had thought twice of the ordeal, but more than twice of the good salary, the perquisites, the two black silk dresses that would be hers next month, and were not half worn out either—one would turn beautifully, she was certain—and she had made her appearance upon deck, distressed in mind and stomach though she was.

"Where's Drewitt and the other?—where's Miss Evershed?—where's the page?"

"Williams is in the other cabin, ma'am; and the rest won't come."

"Won't come!"

"They're dreadfully sick, ma'am—Miss Evershed's a sight. I never did see a poor thing so terribly knocked over in all my life! And as for myself——"

"There, take your dreadful face away!" said her mistress; "you make me ill to see you! Take Miss Lettice downstairs, and come up here in half an hour, and see how I'm getting on; and whatever made you tie me up in this dreadful Guy Fawkes fashion—how have you done it?"

"Oh! my head!—oh! how they do rock the boat about, ma'am, to be sure! Do you think that we shall ever get home alive?"

"You—you vile woman, how dare you try to frighten me like this!" exclaimed her mistress; "unfasten me a bit, and go away. Get there alive!—good heaven! what an expression, Simkins!"

Simkins withdrew with Lettice, after loosening the wrappers round her mistress. Presently Mr. Wynn held a consultation with his daughter, who was not strong enough to keep her feet, as the boat rocked more and more unpleasantly, and finally passed her down the cabin stairs into the

outstretched arms of the stewardess below. By this time the sky looking grey and angry, the wind rising more furiously, the water leaping over the deck with every plunge of the vessel, the captain busy with his orders, the crew on the alert to obey them, the obstinate woman holding her ground still, Martin Wynn marching to and fro when the opportunity presented itself, and clinging to the ship's ropes when it did not.

A sailor more than once advanced to tender his unsolicited advice to the lady—to offer a message from the captain, who was watching her as well as the weather, and somewhat annoyed at the two of them being in the way just then.

"I'm never well below—I'll stay here, if you please."

"The captain's afraid of you being pitched about, mum," said a second sailor; "you're much safer in the cabin."

"Is there any danger?" and the lady looked up with a face that would have changed colour more, had the colour been less permanent.

"Lor' bless you, no, mum!"

"Not the least?"

"We've had fifty times dirtier weather than

this," replied the sailor; "you're as safe here as at home, mum; only if we do ship a heavy sea, you'll catch it. If there was danger we should clap on the hatches—this is only a bit breezy."

"Then I'll stay here."

Lastly, the captain came, and politely suggested the expediency of her retirement, and still the lady held firm and remained defiant. She was always ill in the cabin, and she preferred to remain on deck, at all hazards. Further attempts to persuade her to retire were given up after that; the ship was not in danger, the lady had only her own comfort to study, if she were knocked over, or even drenched by a heavier sea than usual—that was her fault, after all these warnings.

A somewhat amused watcher of all this was Mr. Martin Wynn; he was interested in the lady, or he was a student of human nature who let nothing escape him, and here was a specimen worthy his observation. He made no further attempt to intrude upon her dignity, but stood some little distance away, swaying backwards and forwards with the ship, and retaining always a good grip of the adjacent rope. Fear of harm to herself was only second to the lady's fear of sea-sickness,

however; she was not comfortable in her present position; little screams escaped her now and then, and her hands, less prisoners than of yore, clutched tenaciously at the seat with every rock of the vessel. Rouge and pearl-powder could not keep that face from betraying its pallor at last—even rendered it more hideous by force of contrast, the unnatural bloom standing out in bas-relief against a still more unnatural greenness of complexion. She looked towards Martin Wynn every instant; she would have been almost glad of his companionship now, of his assuring voice, and still more assuring smile; she hoped in her heart that he would not go away with the rest of the passengers, and leave her swinging about on that dreadful boat by herself. If it were possible that she was in danger there—if the ship should go down with all hands, what a dreadful end to her life, what an unfortunate woman to wait so long and persistently for the day of her own doom! Then she screamed again—this time long and vigorously—for the vessel dived savagely into the trough of the sea, and over came a huge wave, that broke with full force above her, bearing her completely down, bringing her on her hands and knees,—a

pitiable object enough for a lady of position—and dashing from her head the coquettish gipsy-hat and one heavy bunch of curls. She was still screaming, when Mr. Martin Wynn had placed her back in her seat, and was sitting by her side with one arm passed lovingly round her waist, and the disengaged hand re-arranging her disordered head-gear.

"Where am I now?—what has happened?" she ejaculated.

"You're all right, ma'am," said Martin; "it's a livelier sea than usual—nothing more. I enjoy such weather as this myself."

"You brute!"

"Thank you, ma'am—but it was an observation not intended to be uttered brutally. You're not hurt?"

"How can I be otherwise? Oh! dear, dear, this shock will kill me! I am not used to shocks—I was never constituted to bear them!"

"We don't know what we may have to bear before we die," said Martin Wynn; "we don't know—hold tight, here comes another!"

The lady clung frantically to Martin Wynn, put her arms round his neck, and screamed again.

The ship lurched, the sea dashed over them, the captain turned his back to enjoy a quiet laugh to himself, the sailors laughed long and loudly, without any attempt to conceal their sense of enjoyment.

"I—I think I'll go down-stairs now—I'm feeling very ill. Oh! this dreadful boat!—I'll write to the proprietors about it as soon as ever I get on shore. Will you see me to the cabin stairs, please?"

"If you're not ashamed to be seen with me," said Martin, with good-humoured satire; "we're forgetting our social positions again—and it's your fault this time!"

"Never mind that now," said the lady, faintly, and missing in her faintness the point of the joke—one never *can* appreciate a joke with sea-sickness coming on. "That need not distress you. You have been of assistance to me, and I am very much obliged to you."

"Come—that's more humble. I didn't like your pride, to tell you the truth—though I never shirk the truth, for that matter—and when you asked if there were any danger, it struck me that if there had been, it would have been the worse for you,

going to the bottom with all that pride, like a stone, round your neck."

"I don't know what you mean—don't talk any more, please. Get me to the cabin stairs, and call the stewardess—I'm dreadfully ill!"

"Ah! women can't stand this kind of sea," said Martin. "You'll be better when you have—have got down-stairs," he added, evidently correcting himself. "Hold fast to my arm, and a fig for decorum. Here comes the sea again—now, we'll run for it."

And away trotted the lady and her escort, the lady displaying extraordinary agility, and a pair of very thin legs, in her haste to reach the cabin stairs. At the top of the stairs an obstacle met them in the shape of a wooden barrier to the wind and sea.

"Oh! dear—they've shut out all the air—I shall die down there. If—if you'll only take care of me on deck, my good man, I think that it will be better for me."

"The roughest weather's to come," said he, knocking at the closed door; "you'll be happier with the rest of 'em—that is, you'll be so queer, you won't much care whether you sink or swim—

up here will keep you very nervous. You are a nervous woman?"

"Sometimes—oh! dear, what a time they are. How *is* this opened?"

"Here, ma'am, take care of this," he said, thrusting into her hand the bunch of curls, that he had retained all this time; "nobody has seen it, if that's any consolation—they had quite enough to laugh at without it, and so I kept the joke from them, such as it was. I don't like to see a woman laughed at—even a woman's vanity held up to ridicule."

"Thank you," said the lady, meekly. The man was an incomprehensibility, and even in her sickness she wondered at him, as at a dream-figure that was part of her troubled vision just then. The cabin door was opened, and the lady fell into the arms of the stewardess, and surrendered at discretion.

"How's my Christie?" asked Wynn anxiously of the attendant.

"She's very sick, sir; but she says she doesn't mind it much."

"Tell her that I say that it 'll do her a great deal of good, and she ought to be thankful for it,"

he cried, beating a hasty retreat from the vicinity of the cabin nevertheless. He could not think of words any more assuring at the moment, though he desired to send a message of comfort to his little one; he was evidently a loving father, as well as a thoughtful man. He took up his old position on deck; he enjoyed the sea, the plunge of the ship, and the good fight she made through the waves; this was a great change for him, and he admired it. He had been hard at work for months in Paris, and a sea breeze in any shape was a something to be grateful for.

He was inclined to soliloquize, and though we are not fond of soliloquies in novels, and consider them bad vehicles for the display of our puppets' thoughts, still we put this one in print, in order that the reader may understand Martin Wynn better than the lady did whom he had escorted to the cabin stairs.

"Supposing that there were danger—more than danger," he thought, or said half aloud, it matters little which, "and down we all went to the bottom, and were heard of never again? All that poor woman's pride, her little vanity, and wretched self-

ishness, all my faults and failings, my pride in my self-culture, such as it is, and my love for little Christie, going down too, with all the rest! What an end to many lives of scheming—to my own foolish dreams—what a strange affair for the old man to live me out, me and his grandchild, and have only Polly to take care of him—independent Polly, as I call her sometimes. Why, we're all proud, after all; only that poor woman is more demonstrative over it, having more money to show off with. I'm a nice fellow to preach, to be sure. And supposing some of us went down, and some of us were saved," added this man, who was a deep-thinker, certainly, and made good the lady's late opinion of him, "what strange events might follow, according to God's will. I don't know whose lives the rich woman's dying would affect—not mine, not anyone's in whom I have an interest"—he was wrong there—"but if I were to sink, and Christie to swim, what would follow then, I wonder? What a strange turn to that child's story, and what a future, a wreck of a future, empty, incomplete, and leaving her in a world of temptation! No, I won't think any more about that—better she and I floated away together out of the world,

than she alone in it. Better—why, Martin, Martin," he said, in self-reproof, "you're giving yourself the horrors, my man; and you've a task before you that should set you a better example. Well, the girl isn't here, to be frightened at me—that's well."

He concluded his soliloquy, and took advantage of a lull in the storm to count his money, which he carried loose in his trousers pockets—notes, gold, silver, and copper *en masse*. There were only three notes, easily counted, and speedily put back out of the draught; but the other coin required care in enumeration, and he set about his task with great gravity, with his arms round the rope to which he still clung.

Martin Wynn finished his task with the worst of the weather. The wind abated as suddenly as it had risen; the clouds seemed inclined to lessen in density, and let a glimmer of sunshine through —only inclined, though, for the rest of the voyage.

The first person to appear on deck was William, the page, who had been missed earlier in this chapter, and whose allotted task had been to run on errands for his mistress, and look after innumerable boxes. The boxes covered with tarpaulin, and the mistress surrounded by feminine satellites,

William had seen no just cause and impediment to smoking cigars and drinking pale ale in the second cabin; but the cigars having disagreed with him, and the pale ale turned to acetic acid, William had come gasping to the deck red-eyed and white, but preserving an idiotic smile as evidence of being game to the last.

There had been a few words exchanged between William and Martin Wynn before starting for Folkestone, and William advanced at once towards his late companion.

"Been on deck all time?" he said thickly.

"Yes."

"Been queer?"

"No. You have."

"Rather—a fellow always gets bad cigars on these boats—beastly things, enough to upset anybody. Old girl floored, I suppose?"

"Your mistress, do you mean?" said Martin, severely.

"Yes—of course I mean her."

"If I were in her service, I would speak more respectfully of her. When I couldn't do that, I would cut off all those buttons, and then—cut off myself."

Martin Wynn seemed to suit his conversation to his customers, and therefore it had its weight accordingly.

"Ah! yes," said the page, looking distrustfully at Martin, "so I shall, pretty quick—I've had quite enough of *her*, you may be sure. I never knew such a woman—full of whims and fancies, as fond of life as a gal, and as fond of herself as twenty gals, and as proud of herself as fifteen hundred. Do you think I shall stop any longer than I can help?—oh! no, not exactly!"

"You are going, then?"

"Yes, I are."

"Ah! you'll be a loss to the establishment, I daresay," said Martin; "what is your mistress's name?"

"Henwood."

"Eh?"

"Henwood. She married old Henwood, the great warehouseman—lots of money—no love on her side—precious little on his after a year of it. I hear that he was very glad to die."

"Henwood—Henwood of Upper Ground Street? Well, that's singular!"

He did not say what was singular, although the

page asked him; he went away on his own train of thought, and the page did not trouble him much with his society, the swimmings coming on again from those wretched cigars they sell on board ship!

They were nearing Folkestone very rapidly—they could see the visitors on the pier looking out for them; it was like home, that run of broken, picturesque cliff, with the town lying in the hollow, and stealing up the slopes, after the encroaching fashion common to towns that are getting on in the world.

The passengers came on deck; even lady-passengers were glad to brave the elements once more—amongst them Mrs. Henwood, supported by the whole strength of her staff, minus the governess, still on her back in the cabin. Lettice Henwood and Christie Wynn came up together, the difference in their complexions not so apparent as when they left Boulogne that morning.

Mrs. Henwood beckoned Martin Wynn to her side the moment she caught sight of him. She had disencumbered herself of her wrappers, and was standing between two green-faced domestics, with her hat on one side, and her curls somewhat rakishly disposed.

"They *will* get together, those two!" she said, peevishly; "and I have asked you to keep them apart—you know I have!"

Martin almost frowned at this; then the absurd nervousness of Mrs. Henwood elicited from him, the instant afterwards, his customary hearty laugh.

"There's not much time for your daughter to imbibe low notions from mine, or mine high notions from yours," he said; "and they'll never meet again."

"No—that is not likely."

Each accepted that fact as positive, and was consoled thereby, for each could not see any chances or changes of life that could set them face to face, although each had known much of life's uncertainty, and noted many changes. Martin Wynn had a faint idea that Mrs. Henwood would have thanked him for past services before they parted, but after this new exhibition of her contempt for him and his, he did not look for it; and he did not think more highly of his fashionable acquaintance. Once the thought crossed him that it would not be a bad opportunity to remind her of an old man still in her service, who was almost

too old for work, and worthy of a pension; and then he checked it with as much pride as had been exhibited in Mrs. Henwood, only it was a pride of a better quality, and would wear longer, and look more graceful at all times than hers.

He drew his daughter by the hand away from the Henwoods, and gave a shrug to his shoulders —a French shrug, that he had acquired in Paris —as though he shook them from his thoughts from that day; and thus the woman of five-and-thirty, with the girlish manners, and the man of the same age, to whose manners she had objected, entered an English port, dreaming not of the after parts they had to play together.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BUSY SUNDAY.

MR. CHARLES WYNN, watchman, was on Sunday duty, as usual, at Henwood's Wharf, Upper Ground Street. Polly had brought him his breakfast, according to invariable rule, kissed his Punch-like countenance, asked if he were well, hoped that it would be a fine day, and that he would be ready for a hearty dinner at one o'clock, and then tripped back to breakfast with her protegée. Mr. Wynn, having drunk his coffee, and eaten his bread and butter, sharing a portion of the latter refreshment with Speck, the terrier, proceeded to look round the wharf, to walk from one extremity to another of the great yard, steering his way through casks, and bales, and hampers, till he reached the inner dock, now full of water, that had come in with the tide.

A more monotonous employment than Mr.

Wynn's—a more uncomfortable vocation—could not have been found in all London; it was well that Mr. Wynn had lost a considerable amount of life's energy, and had always been a patient man. Like his daughter Polly, he made the best of everything; he took things with composure, and was proud to be of service still, earning his own living in that peculiar state of life to which he had been called.

There were many of the clerks and warehousemen who pitied old Wynn in their hearts—a few who condescended to pity him to his face, and got snubbed for their pains. Everyone knew his story—what an old servant he had been to the family, honest and faithful for fifty years, at least, and rewarded niggardly for past services by a night-watchman's place. Everyone thought it hard except Charles Wynn. He was proud to be of use still, and above all charity—there was a great satisfaction in being of help to the last to the Henwoods! He had helped his mistress's father; and when that father died, and his mistress had married her father's partner, also a Henwood—a cousin of her father's, and thirty years her senior—Charles Wynn still remained a servant to

the Henwoods, until the family went abroad; after that he became a watchman in Upper Ground Street, working for the old name till the last.

The Henwoods had been a family without fine feelings; there was no sentiment in their midst; there had not been any, save with one exception, and then sentiment had turned out very badly, and taken one of two daughters from home. Mr. and Mrs. Henwood had been practical people to the days of their death—living well, and paying well, requiring money's worth for their money, and a fair amount of respect from those on whom their money was spent. Their servants remained with them many years, but no affection was ever felt by the employers for them; their wages cancelled all obligations, and old servants could always give warning, and take their departure, without being missed much. Wynn had grown attached to the Henwoods, but not the Henwoods to him; he would have given up all his wages to remain with the old house; the Henwoods would have exchanged him for a better man, if it had been possible to find one as trustworthy for a shilling a week less wages. When the old people had left their riches behind them, cutting off the fugitive

daughter from all share of the patrimony, Wynn remained in service until the heiress's marriage to another Henwood, who was as wooden and impervious as the rest of them. When that Henwood died, and the young widow talked of going abroad, and breaking up her establishment, leaving the wharfinger's business to her managing man, Wynn had reminded her, for the first time in his life, of the long term of years in which he had been of service to her family. He was getting old; he had had a boy and girl to bring up—the boy to start in the world—and he had not saved much money; he would not care to be thrown out of employment, or left upon the parish in due course.

"Find him a place somewhere," Mrs. Henwood had said to her managing man before departure for the Continent. "How tiresome these old servants are. As if they hadn't been paid well for all that they have done!"

So the managing man, puzzled what to do with Mr. Wynn, constituted him watchman of the wharf in Upper Ground Street, and thought little more of him from that day. Mr. Wynn's wages were paid out of the "petty cash," the name of an

old servant was confined to subordinates, and there was no one to estimate him at his true worth, or thank him for his interest in the welfare of the place still. Mr. Wynn had still an idea that his services were duly appreciated, and his memory kept green. He had had always a sense of his own importance—hence the cognomen of Consequential Charles, that had been bestowed upon him in his best days.

That Sunday morning there was a burlesque of importance in his manner, more apparent in the bright sunshine, than in the darkness of night-duty. He was very proud of his responsibility, of thousands and thousands of pounds' worth of "stuff," as he called it—and as he had heard his employers call it—being left in trust to him till Monday morning came, and the office on the right was full of clerks again. No one could tap casks of *their* tallow, *their* oil, *their* turpentine, *their* American flour, whilst he was watchful; and though the keys of the great warehouse, and of the counting-house, where the iron safe was kept, were in other hands, no noise in those offices could escape unnoticed the quick ears of him or Speck. He was proud of his duty, and if he strutted a little over it, and felt it

to be a more important task than other people did, that made his post less heavy and less monotonous.

No one in the world, with the exception of Speck, perhaps, knew how thoroughly well old Wynn performed his duty. The old man would have considered it a sin to sleep during the long nights, whilst he was paid to be awake and watchful; he was ready for any emergency, and though incidents were few and far between, still he was prepared for them, and it was not in nature to take him unawares.

He had been his rounds that Sunday morning before breakfast; he went again after breakfast, with his hands behind him, and his stick trailing in the rear, and Speck, in good spirits with the weather, jumping and nibbling at the stick. He was very methodical, and took fresh stock of the casks—as though one might have been made off with during his meal—and he referred to his register in chalk on the side of the last cask, to make sure that all was correct and satisfactory. He knew what was in hand on that landing-place better than any one else in the Henwood service, for the clerks would have had to refer to sundry brown books with red backs, and he could have

told them at once. Mr. Wynn walked to the warehouse door and listened for the noises that never came, although he had listened for ten years now; he walked under the archway above the dock to the river frontage of Henwood's Wharf, and stood looking at the barges moored there, and waiting for the following day; he looked at the river glistening in the sun, at the Temple Gardens across the way to the left, at the mass of warehouse building, timber-yards, foundries, breweries, and furnace-shafts, all mirrored in the Thames that bright Sunday in February.

"It's a sweetly pretty place," commented the old man, walking back to his more proper sphere of action; "we couldn't have had a finer spot for business or scenery. When the bells come out, we'll go to church, Speck, and pray for all good friends."

The bells came out in due course, and Mr. Wynn and Speck walked soberly to their devotions —to a huge stone in one corner of the archway, placed as a protection to the brickwork from the waggon-wheels rolling in and out all day when business was brisk. Mr. Wynn placed a sack upon this stone, and then sat down thereon, wait-

ing for the bells to cease, arranging a pair of spectacles meanwhile upon his nose, and disinterring from his pocket a well-worn prayer-book of somewhat large proportions, and a Bible, more thumbed and worn than its companion.

When the bells had ceased ringing, Mr. Wynn began his devotions, reading slowly to himself, and following closely the church service, and the lessons for the day. As he read very carefully, and spelt in schoolboy fashion a great many of the words, he was not at the end of his task till close upon one o'clock. Until one boomed forth from St. Paul's he retained his seat there, notwithstanding that he was cold, and had no sermon to deliver. Speck, used to this routine, woke up as the old man pocketed his books, and cocked up two ears vigilantly. He had been asleep all the service, like many of his betters.

One o'clock struck, and Wynn delivered his last prayer.

"God bless us all!" said the simple-minded man, "and make us all fond of one another! God bless my Polly, and keep her just as good as she is now; and Martin, bringing him safe home from furrin parts, and little Christie, and young Zach, who's

turning for the better, and Mrs. Henwood, and Mr. Tinchester, and all connected with the business. Amen."

After which general blessing, Mr. Wynn rose, straightened his back as much as possible and, with great difficulty, walked round the yard to count his casks again, and make sure that no one was under the tarpaulins along with the bales. That task done, he took another survey of the water, shook his head at a penny boat that was passing at the time, as though he entered a protest against Sunday travelling—he and Speck together, the latter barking vociferously—then he returned to the wharf, and looked at his great silver watch meanwhile.

"Twenty past one—and here's Zach with the dinner. What a punctual boy that is!"

The gate bell clanged unmelodiously, as Mr. Wynn reached the outer archway—the great archway, under which Zach's mother had died. Mr. Wynn opened the gate, and Zach Fernwell, spruced up for Sunday, leaped through with Mr. Wynn's dinner on a tray.

"We haven't kept you a-waiting, dad, I hope?"

"No, boy," said Mr. Wynn; "and what have

you been doing to-day? Church, Zach?"

"Yes."

"With Polly?"

"Yes, of course."

"You like it better than you did?"

"I'm not so skeered at it—I don't make it out yet, quite. I like to go with Polly better than minding house."

"That's right. And you're going to school to-morrow—evening-school, you know."

"Yes," said Zach; "and if they make a clever cove of me, I shall get on, and drop into a better berth, Polly says, and earn more money. If the money on'y came in a little faster, dad—that's the worst of it!"

"What do you want more money for?"

"Oh! nobody gets on without money—and your dinner's getting cold, and Polly's waiting for me. I've been a-thinking of minding this here place on Sunday arternoons, and giving you a rest at home, or a walk out with Polly. May I?"

"I never allow substitutes—I should be shamed to do my work by deppity, Zach."

"What's deppity, dad?"

"When you've been to evening-school, you'll

know the English langiwage better, Zach," said Mr. Wynn; "now go home and get your dinner."

Zach departed, and Mr. Wynn seated himself once more on the stone in the corner, and proceeded to do justice to his Sunday's meal. Dinner over, he walked about the wharf again, counted his casks by fifties, referred to his last entry in chalk, took one more look at the river, and shook his stick as well as his head at the next penny boat. Then the gate-bell clanged again, and Mr. Wynn paused to consider that unusual incident.

Speck had paused also, and given vent to a low whine, in lieu of entering his usual protest against visitors.

"Why, it's friends," said the old man, looking at Speck; "how's that, now?"

Mr. Wynn shambled his way to the gates, and opened the wicket therein, the instant afterwards starting back with surprise at the apparition beyond.

A fair-haired, blue-eyed girl darted through and clasped her arms about his waist.

"My dear old grandad—I would come here first to see you and Speck, and tell you all the news."

"That's well. That's kind of you, my Christie," and the watchman stooped and kissed her, before closing the gates upon the outer world.

"I have so much to tell you," ran on Christie; "what foreign places are like, what wonders we have seen, and how I teased father after chapel to come on here this afternoon."

"Ah! he wasn't in a hurry to come and see *me*, then," said Mr. Wynn, ruefully.

"It was Sunday, you know, and on Sundays father goes regularly to chapel. But this afternoon I did try very hard to bring him across the water."

"I hope it was right," said Mr. Wynn, doubtfully; "he would not have come for any one else, I know. Where *is* the boy?"

"Talking to Aunt Polly—when I go across the road, father will come here. He wants a little talk with you about——"

"About giving up this place," concluded the watchman. "Yes, I know. Every year he's good enough to offer me a share in his home; God bless him, he has not been a man to grow ashamed of the old father, or to think him a trouble to him! I like such sons as that," Mr. Wynn added, with a

chuckle, as though he possessed several sons of a different quality, somewhere or other.

"And you'll alter your mind this year, grandfather?"

"And give up taking care of business, and that independence I'm so proud of too. Why, is it likely?"

"You would see so much more of me," said Christie, gravely, and evidently duly appreciating that advantage herself; "we might all have one house—father thinks so."

"Father may mar—father may grow tired of my old-fashioned style, my gal," corrected Mr. Wynn; "he's very proud in his way, my dear, and I could not throw up my berth for any money. I really don't believe that they would like to part with me here!"

"I think——"

"And I think," said the old man, shrewdly, "that your father has sent you over to pave the ground aforehand, and try how sich cooing as yours will answer first. But it's impossible, Christie, so tell me about the furrin parts, and what your father has been doing all this time abroad?"

"Oh! all the clever things that no one else can do," said Christie, earnestly, "like a dear clever father as he is! I often think I'm not proud enough of him—that I ought to do more for him."

"You're a nice old-fashioned baby to talk like that!" said Mr. Wynn, "I must say."

"Oh! don't say that I am old-fashioned," entreated Christie, with a piteous comicality of expression; "for he wishes to keep me always young, and like a child. And yet I'm twelve, and almost a woman, you see—which is very hard."

"Ah! it *is* hard!" commented Mr. Wynn.

"And with the big house to take care of—and the housekeeping to see to—and father, always so forgetful of his dinners and teas—and then the schooling in the evening—it's hard to keep as young as I wish. That's one reason why father wants you and Aunt Polly to live with us—aunt to be housekeeper, and I to have nothing to manage but—myself."

"And will that be hard?" was the dry question put in here.

"I don't know—I never think of myself," answered Christie, innocently. "I have so much to do; father and I are always very busy. Why,

if you and aunt were with us, aunt might keep house whilst we were travelling."

"And what should I watch?"

"The cabinet, to be sure—the great cabinet that will never be finished," said Christie, with a sigh. "You could take care that it did not come to harm whilst we were away."

"I can't see why you go, myself, on these outlandish journeys," said Mr. Wynn, as she stooped and took Speck up in her arms, as a reward of merit for his long patience under non-observance.

"He don't like to part with me—and I keep him happy, just as he always keeps me. Oh!" with a grave shake of her head, "he wants more watching than you fancy. I sometimes think," she added, with a little shudder, "that he would get into trouble without me to mind him!"

Yes, a trifle old-fashioned for her years, it was evident—and it was natural. The sole companion of Martin Wynn, daughter, friend and housekeeper, she had aged a little; not too much, perhaps, not in any degree to her prejudice; for there was no oldness of thought in her face, and the innocence of a child was at her heart still. But

she was a girl who had stepped into a lost mother's place, and had been quick to see the necessity of doing her best to cheer her father. She had seen that four years ago, with a quickness far beyond her years, and Martin Wynn had been slowly and gradually brought back to his old good-tempered, natural self.

Christie changed the conversation, and the watchman and his grandchild spent a pleasant half-hour together; Christie very full of gossip, and the old man all attention. Time reminded the former at last that her father desired to get back to chapel that evening—the younger Wynns were strict dissenters, it was evident—and as Martin wished to see his father, and offer the old inducements for his father to retire from business, Christie thought it necessary to bid the old man farewell.

Adieux were exchanged accordingly, and Christie stepped into the street, the old man looking fondly after her.

"There never was such a gal as that!" he murmured, "Polly excepted, only Polly's younger in her ways somehow—which is funny like. She'll grow a big gal—she'll grow a pretty one—and I

s'pose there's no doubt of her growing gooder and gooder, for it's in the family."

And with this self-laudatory peroration, Mr. Wynn shut himself in Henwood's Wharf once more, and was walking towards the great yard when the bell rang again.

"This is an uncommon busy afternoon for Sunday," said the watchman. "I suppose it's Christie back, for Martin could not have got over yet."

CHAPTER IX.

MR. WYNN CONTINUES BUSINESS.

MR. WYNN opened the gate of Henwood's Wharf, and a man, a stranger to him, glided in suddenly, and stood on business ground before him. Mr. Wynn was somewhat vexed at being taken off his guard; had he not anticipated the return of Christie, he would have adopted his usual habit of dropping the trap in the gate, and looking through at the outsider. Mr. Wynn's equanimity was capable of being ruffled, if his dignity were outraged.

"That's not a proper way of coming in here, whoever you are," said Mr. Wynn. "May I ask your business, or what's the matter?"

The person addressed was a man of middle height, who would have looked taller had he not given away in the chest at an anterior period. A man whose head craned forwards, and hung over himself, as it were. A man very thin

and angular, and but indifferently attired, wearing a shabby suit of black, his outer garment a dress coat, buttoned to the chin, and his throat enveloped in many folds of a dirty white woollen comforter. Mr. Wynn, however, was most interested in the face of the intruder, and paid but little heed to the habiliments. It was a face very white and lined, rendered somewhat repulsive by two shaggy grey eyebrows, which hung at an unnatural length over his eyes, and had an unpleasant habit of rising and falling whilst he spoke. It was one of those faces that lose their bloom, and contract early in life, making old men of their wearers; this had been, once upon a time, a handsome face, but was thin, hard, and dirty now, with no particular expression worth noting at that period. Add to this that he wore a ratty grey tuft trained to a point underneath his chin, and the reader may imagine that it was not an attractive countenance looming at Mr. Wynn in the shadow of the archway.

"I beg your pardon, sir," was the suave reply, however, to Mr. Wynn's question. "I never transact business of a Sunday—it is against my principles."

"Glad to hear it," said Mr. Wynn. "What's the matter, then?"

"I have called to ask for the favour of Mrs. Henwood's address. I have a visit of congratulation to pay that lady upon her safe return from a long voyage. I am a dear and respected friend of hers."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Wynn, doubtfully.

"This is Henwood's Wharf, I presume?" he said, skipping rapidly from beneath the archway into the open yard, and looking round him very attentively; "a fine business site, *sans doute*, and the money rolls in here as the Thames rolls into that dock—regularly, swiftly and deeply. Such, sir, is the commercial world, or the lives, rather, of the lucky ones within it. I am of the commerce that found its decadence early."

"Mrs. Henwood bought a villa at Wimbledon two years ago—or Mr. Tinchester, that's our manager, did for her. If she's at home yet, there you'll find her, sir."

"Thank you. You are watchman here?"

"Ay."

"Only you now?"

"Only me and my dog Speck."

"An onerous task at your age—Mrs. Henwood might have found one more suitable. Surely, now, you are not the Mr. Wynn of whom I have heard so much?"

"Wynn is my name. Do you mind stepping out of the premises? It's a rule of mine to allow no strangers here whilst I'm on duty."

"An excellent rule," said the man, proceeding to retire with an airy step, and a look of unconcern, "honoured in the observance too—Mrs. Henwood should be proud of her faithful servitor. And your name is Wynn, then? You are the Caleb Balderstone of Upper Ground Street?"

"I don't know what you are talking about?" said Mr. Wynn, shaking his head deprecatingly. He was at the gate now, holding it wide open for the stranger to pass through—keeping his eyes fixed upon him also with an intentness that might have dismayed men less at their ease.

"I am glad to have met with Mr. Wynn."

"Thankee," said Wynn. "Will you leave your card, sir?"

"It's of no consequence—I shall see Mrs. Henwood to-day, sir."

"I've a capital memory for faces," mused Mr.

Wynn, aloud, "and I'm a-trying to remember where I've seen yours afore."

The intruder gave a perceptible start at this, and then arranged his comforter round his throat with both hands, clad in huge brown cotton mittens.

"We have never had the pleasure of meeting before, Mr. Wynn," he said, "unless you have ever resided in Manchester, where this humble life has been entirely spent. Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon."

The old man watched him out of sight, as he had watched his grandchild; could he have seen the sudden change of countenance, a change as complete as though the man had removed a mask, he would have known him more readily, although many years had passed since their last meeting. He did not hear the oath escape the lips of this hitherto suave individual, as muttering his anathema on the old man's memory, he went on rapidly towards Blackfriars.

Mr. Wynn, troubled in thought, closed the gate once more—once more proceeded to go his rounds before Martin came to see him. Once again, to balk him, clanged the warehouse bell.

"This *must* be the boy!" said Mr. Wynn; "but how that bell is going it to-day, just like a work-day bell, for the matter of that. P'r'aps it's that scampish-looking fellow with the comforter come back."

Full of this thought, he lowered the trap on the present occasion, and peered through. To his astonishment there was a yellow-bodied carriage in the roadway, a powdered coachman on the box and a powdered footman at the gate, looking down with disgust at his stockings, which had got splashed by the mud—silken-clad calves, shot with black currants.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Wynn.

"Mrs. Henwood wishes to speak to you, my good man," said the footman, patronizingly.

"Mrs.—Mrs. Henwood!" gasped Mr. Wynn. "Is she back again?—is she here?"

"Of course she's here."

Mr. Wynn was bewildered by the advent of his old mistress in Upper Ground Street. It was incomprehensible—it was an event in his life. Mrs. Henwood in England—calling to see him, of all people in the world, and on a Sunday, of all days in the week! What did it mean?

He opened the gate at the same instant as the carriage window was lowered, and the head of his mistress appeared—sharp, proud, and repellent enough in the wintry greyness of that day.

"Watchman!" she called.

Though it was his mistress's command, Mr. Wynn hesitated to obey her. It was leaving the wharf unprotected—some one might slip in whilst he was engaged—in all his life he had never left the place before.

"What are you stopping about?" she asked. "I wish to speak to you."

Mr. Wynn advanced, cautioning the footman to keep a watch on the place till he returned.

At the carriage door he took off his hat and bowed his head reverently before his mistress.

"I am glad to welcome you back again to England," he said, with a voice that even shook a little with emotion. "I am honoured very much by this visit to an old servant of the house."

Mrs. Henwood tossed her head scornfully at this; but the old man had not completed his bow, and did not note the manner in which his homage was received.

"Your name is Wynn?"

"Why—of course—it must be."

"I don't remember you."

"Good gracious, madam, don't remember ME! Not old Charles Wynn, who in your father's time was——"

"Ah! yes—in my father's time—some one of the name of Wynn, I have no doubt. My memory is pretty retentive, even for small matters. You are the watchman here?"

"To be sure I am," said Wynn.

He stood on the kerb-stone, somewhat crest-fallen at his reception. The idea had seized him that his honoured mistress had driven from Wimbledon on purpose to thank him for his long and arduous services, and it was a blow to think how closely he had verged upon oblivion.

"Two months ago a something very unpleasant happened here, and found its way into the papers," said Mrs. Henwood, with great rapidity of utterance. "I wrote to Mr. Tinchester for full particulars, and obtained them. I even believe one paper commented upon the relationship between me and—that woman. That was surely enough to excite me, without any interference afterwards from you."

"From me!" said Mr. Wynn. "I don't see how I——"

"Or your daughter. Don't interrupt me, please, that is a liberty I never put up with. I am not used to comments upon my assertions —I object to them strongly."

Mrs. Henwood gave greater force to her suggestions by a vigorous toss to her side curls.

"But——"

"But there you go again," she said; "really I never met with a man more abrupt. Your daughter wrote to me in Paris—found out my address, and took the liberty of sending me a cramped, ill-spelt, almost illegible epistle, which I was expected to decipher. You must have prompted her."

"Polly said something about it to me," said Mr. Wynn; "but I thought it was all to be left till you got back, ma'am."

"And when I return, there is a second letter—another of those things," she added, with inexpressible disgust, "hoping that if the other had not miscarried, I would pardon the liberty of a recapitulation of the case. This is the meaning of the missive—not the contents, oh! no."

Mrs. Henwood was angry. She spoke in little

angry jerks, jerking her head also with every word. At a distance, to the eyes of the footman standing at the gates of the wharf, it seemed as if Mrs. Henwood were pecking at the scrubby grey hair of Mr. Charles Wynn.

"I'm very sorry," said Mr. Wynn, apologetically.

"I do not say that it was not a very shocking case," she continued, "or a distressing case to happen here. I was shocked dreadfully. Just what every one might have expected—for *she* was the most ungovernable woman whom I have ever met—but it was her own fault completely. I had nothing to do with her goings on!"

"Poor woman!" muttered Wynn, twirling his hat in his hand still, and feeling the draught very much through the open gate behind him.

"I'm not aware that it is any business of yours to pity her—or whether any just and thoughtful being be entitled to pity her at all. Her own fault—many and many a time I warned her of the folly of the conduct she was pursuing. I cannot be responsible for her life or death, or be troubled by people trying to make me responsible by suggesting fifty foolish schemes. I have nothing to do with her

child—I do not intend to have anything to do with it, and therefore I have driven over here to put a stop to that idea at once."

"I will tell Polly so—I thought that she built a little too much upon it. She's a girl who looks too much upon the bright side of everything."

"She is a fool, then!" said Mrs. Henwood, beginning to peck at Mr. Wynn again.

"Ah! there you are mistaken," replied the old man, quickly, almost indignantly.

"I shall judge for myself—I have come to see her, trouble as it is, and no one has a right to expose me to this dreadful inconvenience. I was at the point of death yesterday in a steam-boat, crossing the wide ocean, and ought to have been allowed a little rest and peace of mind to-day!"

"I hope that Polly did not ask you to call upon her—on a Sunday, too, ma'am?"

"Call upon *your* daughter! Ask *me* to call!" almost shrieked Mrs. Henwood. "She knows better manners than that, unless you have brought her up a heathen."

"Which I haven't—quite."

"I call of my own free will, to put a stop to all attempts to extort money from me at once," she

said; "to show that I am not the woman to be hoodwinked by a specious story of that woman's child. The child is no relation of mine, that I can see—that I acknowledge."

"Very well, ma'am. I hope he'll work his way without anybody's help—it will make him the prouder and the better man. If it's harder work for him—I won't say for us—so much the better too!"

"So much the better!" repeated Mrs. Henwood; "but it's an aggravating affair to me, however it turns out. People will talk in this country—and tell falsehoods, and magnify things. You had no right to get that boy a place on MY wharf—it was a liberty—it must be altered."

"Oh! no—I hope not, for Zach's sake," said the watchman; "they don't know anything about it. It's only me and Mr. Tinchester that has the least idea."

"And that daughter of yours—and the boy himself—and——"

"No, the boy does not know yet."

"Well, it will not be long first—and I object very much to all the fuss that has been made. Now, which is your daughter's house?"

"Over the way, ma'am. Where the brown shutters are."

"Is there—is there anything *catching* in this neighbourhood?" she asked.

"Catching!—catching what?" asked Mr. Wynn, absently.

"Nothing infectious about this street?—or in your house?"

"Lor' bless you, no, ma'am!"

"That is why I called here first," she said. "I can meet effrontery or ignorance better than fever or small-pox. Oh! good heaven, nothing like small-pox about, I trust?"

"Nothing, Mrs. Henwood."

"Show the coachman where to drive, then," said Mrs. Henwood, so suddenly drawing up the window as to shave the profile of her oldest servant.

Mr. Wynn gave the necessary directions, the footman quitted the gates for his post behind the carriage, the watchman returned to duty on the wharf, and Mrs. Henwood was driven to the residence of Polly Wynn.

"This has been an uncommon busy Sunday, Speck," Mr. Wynn remarked to his terrier, "hardly

time to look about the wharf, and no time at all for proper thoughts. All sorts of thoughts turning up instead, just as if it was the middle of the week. So *she's* back again—if she hadn't been put out about poor Zach, I daresay she would have been very glad to see me. Bless her heart, how well she looks! And, bless my heart, here I go again, thinking of anything, as if it didn't matter a button. Now, let us sober down, and knock off a prayer or two for little Zach in danger—wus than ever. Let —why, confound that bell, it's at it again, as I'm a living sinner!"

Mr. Wynn and Speck once more proceeded towards the gates, Mr. Wynn remembering, in his progress, who was likely to be the visitor on this occasion.

"Martin it is, no doubt—Martin, who might have done good by keeping where he was—I being out of the way."

He opened the gate, and Martin stepped through quickly, and laid a hand on each of his father's shoulders.

"Well, old gentleman—oldest and best friend—hard worker and slave—I give up my Sunday rules for your blessing."

"God bless you, Martin," ejaculated the old man at once.

"So Christie has no greater power than I to induce you to give up this place?"

"My independence, Martin!"

"I shall never feel that I am getting on in the world with you at this wharf. The world says already that I turn my back on the father."

"The father knows there is not such another son in it," was the quick reply.

"Such another ruffian, and unfilial bully, eh?" said Martin, "well failing with you; I must ask Mrs. Henwood to discharge you."

"Mrs. Henwood!—oh! have you seen her?"

"Seen Mrs. Henwood—yes, yesterday."

"Yesterday—good gracious! But to-day?"

"Well, I was not so struck yesterday with her virtues and graces, as to hurry off to-day in search of a second edition of them," said Martin drily.

"She has been here. She has gone across to Polly."

"About—the boy?" asked Martin, a man quick to leap towards the truth.

"Yes—she objects to our lodger. She was very angry."

"Poor thing!" mused Martin; "she is easily put out."

"I fancy that if—if you would only run across and talk to her yourself—very humbly, mind, and with not quite so much bounce about you——"

"Eh! what do you mean by that?" said Martin, with his brown eyes becoming very large and round.

Mr. Wynn senior hastened to apologize.

"You have a little habit, you know, of speaking out all that you think."

"Why shouldn't I?" he interrupted again..

"Oh! it's a good habit—I don't mind it a bit—but other people might, if they're big guns. And there is a way of saying the same things *genteelly*, you know—why, it's a way I have got myself."

"I think you have got into a mess with this small lodger of yours," said Martin; "burdened yourself and Polly with a human being you don't understand."

"And you blame us—you of all men, who try to do good, and are glad when good comes of your work."

"No, I don't blame you," said Martin, after a moment's reflection; "though Polly is too easy a

woman, and you too easy a man to make converts. That lad you have in possession is as cunning as a fox."

"What—what makes you think so."

"I see it in his face—in those sharp black eyes of his."

"Oh! you should have seen him two months ago, Martin. And as for Polly being easy," he added, reverting suddenly to his son's previous criticism, "she's the very best of little women, and knows what's best, as sure as you do."

"The very best of little women looking always to the bright side, and seeing comfort to be extracted from all things, let their shadows be never so heavy on us—do you think that I have forgotten when Christie's mother died?"

"But—"

"But Polly is not the best guide for this boy—that's my opinion still!"

Mr. Wynn, senior, was thoughtful after this; he would have liked to take that opportunity of defending himself from the charge of "easiness," and even of gently insinuating that he had known times when Martin was easy also, proud as he might be of his firmness now. But time was precious, and

here was a valuable aide-de-camp idling away moments that might affect all Zach's after life.

"Look here, Martin," he said suddenly, "I think it wants you somehow in this case of Zach's. He's a boy trying to turn good—that's everything, you know—but he's a boy that wants help to keep him straight. He was my young mistress's child, and——"

"I have heard the story from Polly."

"Ah! that's all right," said Mr. Wynn; "well, Polly aint the one to take his part with Mrs. Henwood. She's a narvous gal, and will give in to her, or not be able to speak up for him—just because Mrs. Henwood's from a different spear. Why, even I feel small, but you——"

"But me and my bounce," laughed his son, who was evidently proud of his "bounce," and had, therefore, human foibles like other people, "may get over this fine lady. Well, I never was afraid of anyone, or of speaking up for anybody; and Mrs. Henwood and I perfectly understand each other. I don't like interfering in the matter—because you might have written to me, and taken my advice earlier, and so on," he added, half aggrieved at the parental disobedience; "but it's a

good fight to share in, and here goes to support the Wynn standard. I shan't lose my temper—though she will."

"Don't be aggravating, Martin—for you can be very aggravating when you like, too."

"I'll be as gentle as I can; though she's a lady for whom a few home truths might be good. I'm going now."

"I wish you luck, my son," said the sire, gravely.

"Luck for the small lodger, for whose reformation we shall all have to work hard," said Martin.

"A good work that—I've patience."

"True," said Martin, buttoning his coat to the chin; "and now for Mrs. Henwood. Ugh!" he added, with a little shudder, "but she's a tough morsel!"

CHAPTER X.

"THE OLD PLAYFELLOW."

ALTHOUGH Martin Wynn always acted his part courageously, still there were times, only known to himself, when he required a certain amount of preparation. One of these times had occurred, and he paused more than once in his progress through the street, and even up the stairs to his sister's apartments, in order to hold converse with himself, and gather strength for the good fight to which he had alluded.

Naturally he was not a nervous or a bashful man; he was a man fond of the truth, as well as a man vain of his inflexibility, and it annoyed him to think that any feeling of embarrassment should confront him on this particular occasion. It even made him indulge in one or two good-tempered laughs to himself—it seemed so good a joke that he should feel any difficulty in addressing Mrs. Henwood!

However, he took a long breath outside the door, muttered "Here goes," and entered the room, honoured by the rare presence of a lady of fashion. It was a quaint scene upon which he had intruded, which he stood surveying, with his back to the door and his face to the firelight. Polly Wynn was standing before her visitor in much the same manner as a child doubtful of results might stand before an implacable governess—she was looking crest-fallen enough, nervously fidgeting at the corners of her apron with those agile fingers that worked so busily and rapidly on week days, and glancing timidly now and then towards the lady enthroned in her father's easy chair, and scornfully regardful of everything around her.

By the window looking with a fixed intensity into Upper Ground Street, stood Zach, his hands in his pockets, his back to present company. Watching him at a little distance, and yet not forgetting her Aunt Polly or the stately lady by the fireside, was Christie Wynn, self-possessed, if silent. She had long since recognized the lady in the wrappings on board the *Ariadne*, although that recognition had not been mutual. The room was not very light now—the day was dying out, the

firelight flickered spasmodically, and Mrs. Henwood took but little interest in common folk.

She had not glanced towards the door since the entrance of Martin Wynn—and more or less of these sorts of people was immaterial to her. Let her express her opinion and be gone, drawing her shawl more closely round her, lest there should be contagion risked by touching them. She was concluding her remarks on Polly Wynn's conduct when Martin entered, and Martin did not offer to interrupt her. He stood and listened patiently.

"You will be pleased to understand that I can do nothing for that boy," she said, sniffing at her gold mounted vinaigrette almost between every word; "that he is no business of mine—that it really was no business of yours to write to me about him. I cannot be answerable for the folly of relations; I cannot be saddled with the results of an imprudent marriage—I have myself and family to care for. I have been naturally shocked —and there's an end of it. The boy has a father, you say a brother, let him go to them. I can't help—I will not help."

"Thinking that you would have liked to be of assistance was my motive for writing," said Polly

in a faint voice; "of course I did not expect that you would object."

"You have said this before—it was a mistake. You should have had more consideration for my feelings and my station in life, than have dragged me hither to explain how distasteful all this has been to me. You know that I am a lady?"

"I am aware of it."

"Then why should I be interested in a wretched little child like that? No one can be interested. It is not likely—there's nothing pathetic or touching, or anything of that kind about him. Send him away—and let him tell his wretched father that I am not foolish enough to be duped into the patronage of any child of his."

"We shall not send him away, madam," said Polly, betraying a little more firmness. "I may have done wrong in writing to you—taken a great liberty in so doing—I ask your pardon for that. But as for sending Zach away—why, I'm proud to think he's getting happier and happier every day here."

"He must go."

"I would rather that you would not say anything more, Mrs. Henwood," said Polly; "for as

my mind's made up, there's not much chance of altering it—I'm like the rest of us for that."

"But, my good woman, you *must* alter it," said Mrs. Henwood with high-bred astonishment. "I cannot be inconvenienced by such whims as these. Do you understand what we are talking about, boy?" she called to Zach.

"I think so, mum."

"Do you know who I am?" she asked; "what relation your mother was to me?"

"No," said Zach, still without looking in her direction.

"Let him go away as soon as possible," she said to Polly in a whisper; "I'll make it worth your while."

Polly shook her head, and in shaking it became aware for the first time of Martin's presence there.

"Oh! I am very glad that Martin is here to speak for me!" she cried joyfully; "he's better able than I am—he can tell you better than the rest of us why we can't give up little Zach to the cruel streets again. Martin, you will speak?"

"I'm afraid that it's no use my speaking," he said, advancing, drawing a chair with him

and dropping into it by the visitor's side. "Good evening, Mrs. Henwood—the sea voyage has not done you any harm, I see."

Mrs. Henwood leaped in her chair, dropped her vinaigrette in her lap, picked it up and began sniffing at it again with redoubled energy.

"What, you again!—why, how came you here?—and who are you?"

"My name is Martin Wynn, this lady's brother. Once upon a time your playfellow down in Warwickshire."

"Playfellow!—how dare you say such a thing!"

"Until we were taught better manners by your father, who very naturally saw the impropriety. It was his fault in the first place, for building our cottage too near the house—and yours in the second."

"Mine!"

"Why, yes. You were as old as myself, and ought to have known better. We were both thirteen years of age—and you and Miss Ellen used to meet Polly and me in the meadows because it was very dull at the great house. Don't you remember?"

"I cannot be expected to remember all the foolish things of my childhood," was the dignified response.

"Ah! but you must remember," said Martin doggedly. "You are not likely to forget the slap across the shoulders that you got one afternoon from your father, any more than I; the chase he made after me with a horsewhip, and how I doubled and hid under the haystack. Let me see —how many years is that ago?"

"It is not worth while dwelling upon the subject," said Mrs. Henwood hastily. "It is painful to me, and you have not shown any great degree of courtesy in alluding to it. You are a very discourteous man." And Mrs. Henwood, not showing any great degree of courtesy herself, set down her vinaigrette, and replaced it by a double eyeglass, through which she took stock of her interlocutor.

Martin bore the scrutiny well. He had warmed to his task now, and was prepared to speak up for Zach Fernwell. Self-possession, one of the lady's own weapons, on occasions when sea-sickness did not interfere with her deportment, was ready to his hand.

"Send the children away, Polly—let them take a walk up and down the street together; then come back here," said Martin.

Martin's orders were immediately obeyed—Zach and Christie, a strange couple to be hand-in-hand, went out together. Polly returned, but edged away from the conversation to the window. She had had quite enough of "the old playfellow" for one occasion.

"I don't recollect you at all," murmured Mrs. Henwood at last. "I have a bad memory, at times—it is a trouble which I endure with the rest of my cares."

"A bad memory may be a good thing sometimes," said Martin. "It would not hurt us to forget a few of our follies—or a few of the wrongs over which we may feel inclined to brood. Mine is a good memory."

"So I should imagine."

"I wonder I did not remember you at once on board the boat. After all, you have not altered a great deal."

"Don't you think so?" said Mrs. Henwood, with a warmth and alacrity very much in contrast to her past languid indifference. "Is it possible

that the child's features should not have wholly changed? And yet I have had so much to distress me—seen so much of the world, that I ought to have looked more old—to have been, as it were, wholly unrecognizable. How strange all this is!"

Mr. Martin Wynn held his peace. He was on the point of recounting the few facts by which he should have recognized her, but he doubted the policy just then; and as the whole matter was foreign to her presence there, he could afford to be silent, and leave a better impression lingering with the rich woman. She was interested in this new topic of conversation; and could have set Zach aside for good, and reverted even to the bygones, for the sake of a compliment or two. It was a pitiable vanity; and Martin Wynn, the first to see it, was the last man on earth to foster it.

"Concerning the boy," said he, bluntly. "Shall we settle this question, Mrs. Henwood?"

"So far as I am concerned, it is settled," she said more sharply. "You are not conceited enough to think to alter me?"

"Yes, I am."

Mrs. Henwood pushed back her chair a little way in her astonishment.

"It is not possible. I am a woman of the world, and know the world—my place in it, and what is due from it to me. You could not have picked out a woman less likely to be impressed by any appeal to sentiment."

"That's rather lucky—for I am not sentimental myself."

Mrs. Henwood looked at her watch.

"I think that I have remained here quite long enough—I will stay here five more minutes, if you wish it. But I am very weary of this subject."

She lay back in the chair, and half-closed her eyelids. It might have been to display her eyelashes, of which she had been vain from her girlhood—on the instant Martin Wynn remembered that weakness also, and repressed a smile. After all, sharp-featured as she was, there were signs still of a handsome woman—one who had been perhaps very handsome before the cheeks went in, and the lines came out far too thick and plentiful for five-and-thirty summers. It was a fretful-looking face now—but there was still grace in the ruin Time and her own bad temper had made.

"My time is precious, like your own," said Martin; "therefore I will be very brief. I have seen this boy for the first time to-day. I have heard his story from Polly."

"Oh! the story of this disgrace—*my* family's disgrace—will spread rapidly enough, I do not doubt."

"Well, I do not doubt that myself; stories get about in capital style—especially the stories we don't want everyone to hear. Now, make this a good story."

"Eh?"

"You say that you are a woman of the world—very well, then you value the world's opinion. You would not like it to point at you and say, 'There goes a woman who would not give her own sister's child a chance of saving himself from the devil!' But you would be pleased to hear that world's applause for saving him—as you have a right to save him, if you are a Christian."

"Talk to a woman of the world still—I am no Christian!"

"I hope that is not true."

"You are a pious man," she said, with bitter intensity—"a preacher perhaps?"

"I have preached," replied Martin, "in a hurry, to fill up a gap amongst our local ministers; but preaching is not to—to my taste."

"I should have thought it had been."

"Not that I like my present line of argument about the world," said Martin—"asking you, a woman, too, to think of the world, when I should have spoken of Him who made it. But you are a strange woman!"

"And you the strangest man whom I have ever met—what are you?"

"Does it matter at present?"

"Not at all," she said, taking up her smelling-salts; "go on."

"At least, then, give this boy your moral support," said Martin—"I do not think that we shall ask any greater favour. Let him be impressed with the conviction of his relations—his own mother's relations—being interested in his rise in life, and leave the rest to us."

"Are you aware that he has a father?—as bold, and bad a villain, as ever breathed? That he has a brother a thief on the streets?—that to become interested in one is to raise up all the rest?"

"Or to defend him from the rest, and give him strength to hold his own against them."

"Is it possible that you can speak like this in the cause of a boy you do not know?"

"It is very possible."

"A boy in whom you may be deceived—who may be like his father and his brother," said Mrs. Henwood—"who is sure to be."

"I have my sister's word that this boy has improved already—has shown an anxiety lately to be quit for ever of his past life."

"It is true. Zach has altered very much," said Polly.

"I wish, my good woman, that you would not interfere," said Mrs. Henwood, coldly—"I am speaking to your brother."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, madam."

"Now look here," said Mrs. Henwood, taking up her vinaigrette again, and keeping time with it on the palm of her hand, "*I* do not wish to be talked about; my half-sister—not my own sister, as you pleased to term her—brought the name of Henwood unpleasantly before the world by running away with her music-master. That affair passed over—she dies a beggar at my warehouse

gates, and gets me in the papers—I can't escape those dreadful papers, let me try as hard as I will! If the boy gets in the papers, up will come the whole story again—whose nephew he is, and all that. Now if he stays at the wharf, will he be put in the papers any more, do you think?"

"I don't think that he will."

"Not that my sister's child—my *own* sister's child, they're sure to say, the wretches!—is drudging on as errand-boy, whilst I am rich? Why, that's the very thing they will say."

"He will rise in the world. 'Every honest lad does."

"He must rise not in my service—there, will you take care of him?"

"I have a daughter to care for."

"So have I," was the quick answer.

Martin saw that he was losing ground; he had made a blunder, and hastened to rectify it.

"It is not my duty—it is yours," said Martin; "were he my sister's child——"

"Good gracious!" gasped the shocked Polly, in a subdued voice.

"I would devote myself to him and his advancement."

"And how would he reward it?"

"I should look for a higher reward than his," said Martin.

"Oh! how dreadfully pious you are!" said the lady, rising; "you're an amusing man, for you are interested in everything, and I have so great a trouble to find interest anywhere. Well, I will try this boy for three months—there, Mr. Martin Wynn, see what a convert you have made!"

"I am really flattered," said Martin, politely; "I am sure that we are all obliged."

"In three months let me know the result. You," pointing her bottle of smelling-salts like a pistol at Martin, "tell me the result, if it be a good one."

"I may be in Paris again, madam."

"Whatever are you?" said Mrs. Henwood, tetchily—"a detective policeman?"

"I am a marqueterie worker."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Henwood, thoughtfully; "a good one?—for whose house do you work?—what makes you go to France?—for whom?—what salary do you earn?"

Mr. Wynn only condescended to reply to one of these questions.

"I go to France for the reason that we have a branch house abroad, and I am handy there."

"He's the first in the——" began Polly, when Mr. Martin Wynn checked her by a look.

"Then Zach is to be reported upon in three months' time—at this place?"

"Here! Oh! no; I shall never come here again—it's a dreadful neighbourhood! At my villa at Wimbledon."

"Very well."

"You are a sharp man—a clever one, perhaps—at all events, you are a man who will not impose upon me. Watch that boy for three months, and then bring him to me, if he be still trying to become respectable. But——"

She rose, and put her salts into an embroidered bag that hung upon her arm; she took a deep breath, and lost all her languid manners when she spoke again.

"But if he prove false to this house—if he go wrong by ever so little—which he will—don't come, and let me never hear of him again. Will you promise that?"

"I promise," said Martin.

"Give me your arm, and help me downstairs,

Mr. Wynn," she said; "how I ever got up such a staircase, Heaven knows!"

Mr. Wynn, thus adjured, escorted Mrs. Henwood downstairs to her carriage, saw her safely within it, and stood hesitating at the door.

"Have you anything more to say?" she asked.

"Nothing more."

"Nothing about Sunday travelling like this?—that's in your way, I suppose?"

"It's a bad practice to be rattling about in a carriage on the Sabbath-day," said Martin, thus adjured; "but you are weak, perhaps?"

"I am nothing of the sort. Why, I could have walked from Wimbledon, if I had liked."

"Ah! then, I would have liked."

"You are a very plain-spoken man—very proud of being abrupt and bearish, I have no doubt."

Martin started a little at this.

"Try and polish yourself more, along with your furniture," she said; "it will not do you any harm, *old playfellow*."

Martin started more than ever, as well he might, Mrs. Henwood accompanying her last remark by a long and affected laugh—a laugh that at a hundred yards distance might have been taken for

genuine, and passed for "girlish." Before he had recovered his equanimity, a gloved hand was extended to him.

"Good day, Mr. Wynn. I have been very much amused.

"Good day, ma'am."

The carriage drove off, and Martin Wynn looked after it stolidly for awhile.

"If she isn't touched in the head, it's odd to me," he muttered, before he proceeded upstairs again.

Upstairs, Polly ran into his arms, and kissed him, laughing and crying at the same time.

"What a dreadful woman!" she cried; "and, oh! Martin, how clever of you to talk her round to pitying our Zach!"

"She's a little variable—I saw it in her eyes," said Martin; "and I thought that she would change in good time. Where's that boy?"

Zach and Christie entered at this moment. It was very dark in the room, and had Polly not given a sudden stir to the fire, and rendered the little place all aglow, the night would have gained the mastery over them.

"Zach," said Martin, "I want to speak to you."

Zach came and stood before Martin Wynn, held his ground for a time against the steady, searching eyes, then looked down and shuffled with his feet.

"You know more about that lady than you have owned, Zach."

"Me, sir?"

"Come, out with it. Let us start fairly. Who is she?"

"My aunt."

"Ah! exactly. Well, if you are sly enough to keep that to yourself for three months longer, it may not do you any harm. Although I object to slyness, mind."

Zach nodded his head. He was afraid of this new face confronting him; he scarcely knew what to make of it.

"I'm to look after you for the next three months —I shall drop upon you at all times, and in all kinds of places. You will keep straight?"

"Yes—I think—I will!"

"It's no good thinking—you must promise. I have been made to promise, boy. Say, you will?"

"I will."

"That's better; now, don't break it, or I shall not believe you worth a sixpence any more. Don't

break it, for your own sake—for there's a chance ahead of you, and it will die out like a candle-flame, and leave us all in the dark, if you're not plucky."

The boy caught at the last word—it belonged to his vocabulary, and placed them both on a level. This was what Martin Wynn had wished.

"I'll be plucky, sir. I'm getting on!" cried Zach, almost with enthusiasm; "it isn't so hard as it was."

"That's well, too," said Martin, clapping him on the shoulder. "With every day we'll drop a bad habit, and tramp it under foot. We'll not give way—we'll do our best in the sight of man and of God."

Zach burst suddenly into tears, and Martin looked at him with greater intentness.

"What are you crying for?"

"I—don't know—hardly," said Zach, drying his eyes. "I had a fright in the street to-day. I saw some one I knowed."

"Who was it?"

"Some one like the guv'nor. It wasn't him," he added, after a moment's pause; "but it was like him, werry!"

Martin looked serious; he turned to the fire, and indulged in one of those shrugs which he had learned in France.

"We must do our best," he muttered. "I'm sure we'll all try, except that lad, perhaps. It's very strange that I do not feel much confidence in *his* efforts. What *is* there in that boy that I don't like?"

He took his chin in his hand, as though he enlisted it into the service to solve the mystery. He stooped and looked more intently into the fire, hoping, perhaps, to find it there; he fell into deep thought, with his brow furrowed, and all the smiles quenched from his face. Was he, after all, not so happy a man, or so good-tempered a man as he would have the world—that was, his daughter—believe! Or had the shadow of the evil genius lingering outside still—the watcher for *his* chance!—fallen upon him in that hour, presaging much that was to trouble him?

To trouble more than him, for there were many lives dating afresh from that day. Beyond there in the crowd, as here in the little needle-woman's room, there were lives to be changed, and hearts to be wrung. From the promise of Martin Wynn

to Mrs. Henwood—from Zach Fernwell's promise to Martin Wynn—were to evolve plot, mystery and passion. The quiet life flowed away with the tide that rippled out of the inner dock of Henwood's Wharf that night.

END OF BOOK THE FIRST.

BOOK II.

MORE ORDEALS THAN ONE.

CHAPTER I.

OLD FACES.

ZACH FERNWELL went to work industriously after the visit of Mrs. Henwood to Upper Ground Street. He set his shoulder to the wheel, and sank the bygones; a week after the interview recorded in our last chapter, even Martin Wynn, marqueterie worker, had greater hopes of him.

Zach worked well in the office; he was regular in his attendance, willing to serve everybody, and quick in his service. It seemed as if the knowledge of the ordeal before him, the chance before him when three months were passed, had added a brightness and lightness to his efforts, which rendered his task no longer arduous. Martin Wynn, who had already begun a series of sudden appearances at Upper Ground Street, attributed this change to sundry lectures that he had given Zach, and to

Zach's gratitude for his interest in him. He scarcely gave his sister Polly credit for her exertions, for she was a woman easily influenced, and wanting in firmness. It did not strike him that firmness was scarcely the article required for Zach at this juncture, or that the youth under probation took time to comprehend strangers, and was for a time suspicious of them, and their good intentions. Young as Zach was, he had been at war with the world all his life—knowing no friends, scouted by his enemies, the shopkeepers, the police, and the bullies of his own tribe. He had no faith in any one till he settled down in Upper Ground Street, only faith then—after a while—in old Wynn and his daughter. He was afraid of Martin yet, nervous concerning the watch that Martin kept upon him, but he found all encouragement, and hope in Polly Wynn, and it was she who worked the good in him at which more than she rejoiced.

Polly found something to praise Zach for every day; that was her policy of management, questionable enough in most cases, but having its effect on her protegée. She found time to prophesy concerning the brightness of Zach's future; they stood on the vantage-ground together, like mother

and child almost, looking at the brightness of the new estate, and believing in its golden promise. Polly was a castle-builder; she helped to deceive herself as well as other people, for she had faith in the days to come. She saw Zach making his way in the world, for her heart was in Zach's advancement.

There was something singular, almost touching, in this poor woman's love for the boy. Even the boy, unmalleable as he was, was not proof against it. His mother's had been a fitful, wild beast's kind of affection for him; but this woman's was very different, a something which took time to understand, and which, understanding, was likely to endure.

"What makes you care anythink about me?" he asked once; "I aint a relation."

"I love a boy who tries to grow good," was the simple answer; "that s the kind of boy for my money."

"We'll try our hardest."

"That's right. P'r'aps the mother who prayed that you should alter for the better, watches every step, Zach. I don't think it would do any harm to fancy that."

"Did you ever know my father?"

Polly started.

"Yes, I did," she said almost mournfully.

"I shouldn't like to fancy him a-watching of me," he said shivering; "I can't bear the sight o' him."

"Hush, that is not right. After all, your father——"

"Yes—but you know what he is."

"I have heard that he is—strange. When I saw him last he was sixteen years a younger man—a clever man, who might have made his way in the world like you."

She brought an encouragement for Zach at every turn, and Zach profited thereby. He went to evening-school after this—Martin decided upon that step at once—even reprimanded Polly for having neglected it so long.

"I thought I wouldn't try him too much at once," said Polly, in defence.

"You cannot keep a mind like his too much employed," explained Martin.

"You're right, of course, Martin," said his sister deferentially, "I only fancied that he might find schooling hard work to begin upon—after a long

day at the wharf. I always found my letters very troublesome—that's why I'm so poor a scholard still, brother."

"Ah, you didn't get much schooling, like me; and you had not the chance of teaching yourself afterwards, which I had, thank God!"

"One clever is enough in a family, they say," said Polly, with a laugh, "and I'm glad that that's you. I should find cleverness too much of a trouble to manage."

"If I did not know Polly Wynn, I should set that down for solemn banter," he said, laughing also; "for I know how poor an education mine is, and how much more I have to learn to be presentable. And what with my work, and with Christie, where's the opportunity?"

"Nowhere, I hope," said Polly, sententiously; "for if you aint content with all the hard words you've got hold of now, you ought to be ashamed of your ingratitude."

Martin, proceeding homewards, after this little dialogue with his sister, was unaware of a follower in his footsteps—a stealthy watcher of his progress. He went on to the end of his journey unsuspiciously—letting himself into his house in

Griffin Street, Tottenham Court Road, and closing the door upon a shadowy being who leaped like a wild cat to the step the instant afterwards.

"A four and a five—that's forty-five," said this being; and then he was running out of the street into the busy thoroughfare beyond there, where it is not our task to follow him.

A fortnight afterwards we have more to say concerning him, for he was in Upper Ground Street again, where the fog had stolen, rendering all things dense and heavy. From the house of Charles Wynn he saw emerge a boy who ran rapidly along the street, swinging a bag in his hand, and whistling cheerfully. The first impulse took the watcher towards him—the second sent him to the rear, running swiftly and noiselessly in the track—a grey outline in the mist that night.

Zach disappeared down a street on his left—for the boy who had issued forth was Zach Fernwell, on school duty—and the watcher followed still, noting the house at which the boy stopped, knocked and was admitted.

Later that night, when the fog had thickened more and more, and women were groping their

various ways homewards, Zach Fernwell re-emerged, and had not proceeded many yards towards Upper Ground Street, when the watcher took his place at his side, and muttered very feebly and indistinctly his Christian name.

Zacy dropped his bag in affright, picked it up once more, and began to tremble somewhat.

"What, Teddy—here again!" he said. "You told us all you wouldn't come no more!"

"No more I would," said Teddy, speaking with difficulty—fighting with his breath, in fact; "but no one's done as I wanted 'em to—that's all. You're sorry to drop upon a feller like me—now?"

"No, not sorry, Teddy," was the slow reply; "but it upsets me like. I can't bear too much."

"Not too much good all of a lump. Oh! it's easy enuf, I daresay."

"You've lost your voice."

"Awful cold—spouted the boots for tenpence, luck not being fust-rate and the weather setting in muggy," croaked Teddy; "never mind the odds of that. So you're sorry to see us, Zach?"

"I didn't say so."

"I never meant to come no more," explained

Teddy; "but the guv'nor wouldn't go out of town, and sumfinks in the wind about you."

"Oh! about me. He has found me out—he saw me, Teddy, a Sunday or two ago."

"O' course he did. And didn't I ax the old bloke at the wharf to move you—not that it would have mattered much, arter all—and nobody took no adwice o' mine. Werry well—sarves 'em right now, whatever happens!"

"Teddy, I'm trying my hardest to get on. You've heard mother speak of her sister?—well, I've found out——"

"What everybody had found out long ago—how sharp on you!" said Teddy, satirically. "I guesses—don't palaver about that."

"In three months she's to give me a lift, I think. Such a rum old gal! Teddy, you remember the top of father's walking-stick?"

"Why, o' course, he carved it for her."

"Oh! that's it."

"Who's number forty-five Griffin Street?" asked Teddy, in his hoarse whisper.

"Her brother."

"That little woman's brother? Hook it there, then."

"I don't like him—he's a hard un, Teddy. He's one of the precious good uns, that don't like anybody to be wus than hisself."

"Hook it there, I tell you, and throw the guv'nor off the scent a bit."

"I don't see how I can. I work at the wharf —I go to school at that place behind here."

"Then it's all up," said Teddy; "he'll call for you; and nobody can't stop him."

Zach could not refrain a groan of dismay at this.

"Why, you wasn't so sweet on that watchman's crib when I comed fust for you, Zach. How they are a-turning you aginst your own flesh and blood! I don't say it isn't all the better," said Teddy, quickly; "but how they are a-turning on you."

"They're good to me. If I could only keep good, Teddy, now, I might, when I'm a man, be rich—*rich*, Teddy—and then of help to you."

"Oh! I don't want no help," said the other. "I's the feller to help myself, and no thanks to nobody. I don't want to see you no more—never no more. I never meant, on'y up turns this blessed mess, and I know you'll be dropped on and

walked off. And all the better for you, Zach," he said, in as loud a voice as his huskiness would permit, and much to the astonishment of Zach; "for the guv'nor's a good sort, and you ought to do all you can for him, whatever it is; for if we don't, the three on us, hang together in these hard times, what's the good of being o' one fam'ly at all."

Zach looked in a bewildered manner towards his brother. Had Teddy gone out of his mind?—what was the reason of this sudden change in the nature of his advice? He would have asked the reason had not a hand fell on his shoulder like the clutch of a tiger, and he found himself twirled into the roadway. Before he could recover his surprise he was on the pavement again, side by side with a round-shouldered man, who was walking between Teddy and him, keeping a hand on each.

"Well, Zach, it's pleasant to meet like this, my boy. Thank your brother Teddy for finding you out. Teddy's as clever a fellow as one will meet in a day's walk—a credit to the family!"

Zach gasped for breath. The instinct to escape was strong upon him—the desire to wrench himself free, and hurry away screaming for help, could

scarcely be resisted. But he was in the trap now; the father and brother had plotted his capture, he thought, and there he was, a legal prisoner.

"Well, are you not glad to see me, you young dog?" Mr. Fernwell asked with a sudden shake.

"You'll let me go back to *them*—won't you?" asked Zach; "they'll sit up—she'll sit up! Won't you let a feller go back agin?—I can never be any good to you."

"Ah! but you will be, my prodigal," said the father. "We have changed all that, as the French say. We are going into a new line of business, and dear little Zachary will be of infinite use. This way, my child of an unfortunate mother!"

"Where are we going?"

"Keep your mouth shut, or the cold will get on your chest—just as it has on your dear brother's. Where are we going, did you ask?" he said to the boy—"why, *home*, to be sure! This way."

CHAPTER II.

ZACH COMES HOME.

POLLY WYNN sat up late for her protegée. The watchman departed upon night duty, the lodger went to bed, the public-house at the corner closed its doors upon the night, Upper Ground Street was left to itself and the fog, and still no Zach came back to make one solitary woman's heart light.

"He will come back yet—presently—before anybody finds it out, and then I can forgive him," said Polly, after drawing back the blind, and striving to peer into the murkiness below her. "It would be hard, after all our hopes that he'd do better, and grow better, too, if he did not. He'll come," she added assuringly.

Polly had been round to the school, and learned that Zach had left for home some hours since. If

he had lost himself in the fog, strayed to the river side, and so *in!* what an end to a life which had known but little brightening!

"I'll do a bit more work, as Mrs. Spinks the butcher wants this dress for Sunday."

Polly sat down to fresh work, and to a fresh candle to throw a light thereon; but the work was not congenial to her frame of mind, and she set it aside, and took up her bonnet and shawl.

"I'll go over to the wharf, and ask father what I shall do."

She had delayed imparting any information to Mr. Wynn until that late hour; now it seemed necessary. Why, there was even a faint hope—the last that hopeful woman had now—that Zach might be keeping her father company. She went downstairs cautiously, opened the street door, and started back in dismay. On the doorstep, with his head on his chest, and his hands in his pockets, sat Zach Fernwell.

"Zach!—oh! good gracious, it is you! Where have you been?—what is the matter?" cried Polly, wringing her hands over him.

Zach rose with difficulty, and turned a white face on Polly Wynn.

"You're ill—you've met with an accident!" she cried.

"Nothink much," said Zach; "don't be skeered—it's nothink."

"Come upstairs and tell me all about it."

Upstairs, and in the little front room, Polly and Zach sat down. Zach shifted his position after Polly had taken up hers, screwing himself in some degree away from her. He was more like the old Zach that night—the boy of two months since whom she had hoped to reform. But Polly, in her anxiety—and in her faith—did not perceive it. She only saw that he was very white, and that his eyes were very bloodshot.

"You lost yourself in the fog?—say you lost yourself," said Polly.

Zach said so accordingly. Anything to oblige a lady interested in his actions.

"Yes—I got lost."

"And then?"

"And then I got knocked down by a horse and cart."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!—did you, though?"

"And picked up agin, and tooked into a doctor's."

"What did the doctor say?"

"That nothink was the matter, and I could go home—which I tried to do, but my head got thicker, and the fog got thicker, and I couldn't find the place out."

"But here you are at last, Zach!—why didn't you knock?"

"I tried, and couldn't somehow. Then I must have gone to sleep there, thinking that I had. Oh! my head!"

"You'll be better in the morning. I'd go to bed now. Oh! Zach, I was almost afraid that you had met some one, and that they had persuaded you never to come back."

"Ah! that isn't likely, now."

Zach went to bed at once. It might have been noticed that he carried his candlestick unsteadily, and that he still walked with difficulty; but Polly, packing up her needlework, failed to detect the weakness. Zach maintained that he was all right now, that he could not eat any supper, and but wanted rest; then Polly kissed him like a mother, and he went to his small back-room, locked the door upon all intruders, set down his candlestick, and then dropped silently to the floor, crouching

there with his head supported by the bedside, as he had crouched with his head against the door in Upper Ground Street.

"Oh! the drink!—why did he make me drink?" moaned Zach. "What does it all mean—and what's to come on it? It's all up, I know—but what's to come on it!"

He sat wondering what was advancing on its way towards him—he held his head between his hands and tried to think. It was a miserable, old, and pinched face on which the light shimmered in that room. More, it was a disappointed face, looking out, as it were, upon a darkness that cast back its shadow on him.

Suddenly he leaned forwards his hands upon the floor, his eyes dilating, his breath suspended. In the next room, divided by a thin partition from his own, some one was praying—praying aloud in her intensity for him—thanking God again that he had returned, as the woman had thanked Him once already.

The boy's face darkened more and more; once he moaned as though in pain—as though his feeble sense of right had revived again, and stabbed him. Why did this woman care so much for him?—

what good was he to anybody?—what good was likely to come to him now?

"It's all gone," he said; then he lay back in his old crouching position; "it's no good trying no more. Why didn't he let me stop away with him and Teddy. It would have been better for the lot on us."

He went to sleep in that position, breathing long and heavily; the daylight came in at the window-blind, and found him there still. Could Polly Wynn have seen that miserable face in the day-dawn, she might have read a warning from it, and have lost much hope in him.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEARER OF GOOD NEWS.

ZACH'S adventure in the fog was scarcely a nine days' wonder; for Zach was at home again, proceeding steadily to business in the day-time, and to school in the evening, and keeping no late hours.

The watchman heard the story and believed it; why, the fog had been so thick in his ware-house yard, that he might have fallen into the inner dock, and no one the wiser, till he turned up with the tide somewhere about Blackwall! Martin Wynn heard the story in due course, and laughed at it, in his usual good-tempered way. What! was a sharp lad like Zach inclined to lose himself so readily, he said; and then the subject was dismissed, and Zach was more easy in his mind concerning it.

He was not quite so easy in his mind concerning Martin Wynn's behaviour, however; he had never

taken kindly to that gentleman; he had even distrusted the laugh with which Martin had received the narrative of his adventures. He did not care to meet Martin too frequently; and it was a source of perplexity to him why Martin looked in at odd times of the day and night, once met him coming home from school just as his father had met him, and walked back with him to Upper Ground Street. The months of probation went round—the March winds set in, the April showers came—they were bawling "primroses" in Upper Ground Street—the early days of May stole round, and the three months of Zach's probation were nearly at an end.

It was an early day in May, then—one evening before the gas was lighted in the streets—that a knock, heavy and impressive, was delivered at the door of No. 45, Griffin Street, Tottenham Court Road. A heavy and impressive knock, and yet delivered by a hand that trembled somewhat as it was raised towards the knocker.

Presently the door was opened, and a child stood in the doorway.

"Is Mr. Wynn in, miss?" was asked, in a hoarse voice.

"No, he is not. Is it business?"

"Yes."

"Are you from Stanley and Burns?"

"No, I aint."

"My father will not be at home till half-past eight, I know."

"Thankee—then I'll call agin."

At half-past eight to the minute, the call was renewed, Christie Wynn appearing at the door once more.

"At home yet?"

Christie shook her head.

"Where's he gone?—can't I find him anywheres?—at the public round the corner, miss?"

"He has been out all day—you'll never find my father in a public-house," said Christie, with severity.

"Oh!—I thought I might."

"Is it anything important?" asked the daughter.

"Werry—or I shouldn't have comed."

"You can sit down here," pointing to a hall-chair in the passage, "and wait here, if you like. I do not think that Mr. Wynn will be long."

"Thankee—I'll wait, I think."

Christie Wynn seemed to repent of her invita-

tion, as the stranger stepped into the passage. She looked at him long and anxiously. In the full light of the hall lamp burning there, he was not a presentable object—a tall, ungainly being, very shabbily attired, with one boot and a shoe as pedal adornments, and two black eyes as facial ditto.

"You needn't be afeared," said he, reading the expression on Christie's face correctly; "I'll sit here quiet as a mouse."

"Oh! I'm not afraid," replied Christie, drawing herself up proudly; "what have I to be afraid of?"

"Well—I bite," explained the other.

Christie gave a slight jump backwards, and Teddy—for it was he—smiled for an instant, and then became suddenly grave.

"On'y my fun, and it aint much of a time for fun either," said he, with a half-groan; "I do hope he won't be long."

"I hope not."

Christie Wynn went upstairs, and was heard to lock herself in; Teddy Fernwell sat down on the extreme edge of the hall-chair, put his large hat on his knees, and his hands into his hat, looked up

at the ceiling, at the floor-cloth, glanced in the direction of the stairs again.

"I wonder what sort of chap this is?" he muttered once, "or what he'll think of me?"

A quarter of an hour's patient duty in the hall-chair, and then Teddy became aware of Christie Wynn watching him from the balusters in the background.

"It's all right, miss, I aint took nothink. I aint moved," he said.

"Why, do you think I take you for a thief," said Christie, almost angrily, "or that my father has not taught me better than to suspect everybody I meet?"

"Take me for a thief—well, I hope I aint quite so bad as that!"

Christie Wynn withdrew again; but she was an inquisitive girl, and had not yet satisfied her curiosity concerning this arrival. She was alone in that first-floor front, waiting patiently for her father's return—the supper laid, Martin's chair placed for him, and his slippers on the hearthrug—and the consciousness of a stranger in the house rendered her fidgety and watchful.

She appeared again.

"Will you have a book to read, young man?" she asked.

"No, thankee, miss, I don't do anything in that line."

"Not read?"

"Well, no."

"A big boy like you—almost a man! Oh! dear—I am very sorry!" And exit Christie once more, locking herself in as usual, for precaution's sake.

Teddy sat and considered these last remarks. He laughed to himself at the sympathetic voice he had recently heard; rubbing his great red hands together, as though the novelty of a child's sympathy for him was fresh and new, and a something to be appreciated. He flung his head back, and opened a large mouth to say, "That is not so bad;" then suddenly became grave again with the graver thoughts that had brought him to that house. Presently a key was inserted in the latch without, the door was opened, and Martin Wynn stepped briskly into the passage.

"Hollo!" he said, perceiving Teddy on the instant, "who are you?"

"I've come on business—my name's Teddy—Zach's brother."

"Oo'h!" said Martin, doubtfully regarding him; "have you come about Zach?"

"Yes."

"Bad news?"

"Why, no, sir," cried Teddy, with alacrity, "*good news!*"

"Why didn't he bring it himself?"

"I'll tell you presently."

"Come up stairs, and wipe your feet, please."

"I'd—I'd rather talk here."

"I have no secrets from my daughter—and you may trust her with anything."

"Werry good;" and Teddy Fernwell followed Martin Wynn upstairs to the sitting-room, and stood an amazed witness to the affectionate greeting between father and child. *That* was incomprehensible, for there was no evidence of affection in his way—lots of kicks, but no kisses.

Martin dropped into a chair, and his daughter proceeded to unlace for him a pair of stout double-soled Balmorals; Teddy compared everything new with his past experience, and thought how those boots would hurt!

"I have been wondering a great deal about you, father," said Christie, "thinking how late you were,

and what I should do if you never came home any more."

"A cheerful thought!—is that what you call keeping your spirits up, my girl?"

"But you are never quite so late as this."

"There are times when one cannot help being late, Christie," replied her father. "Now, young fellow, will you take a chair? Will you come to the fire?"

"I'll sit here," said Teddy, subsiding into a chair by the door.

"Well, what's your business?"

"I'll just take a breath, please," said Teddy. "I've on'y jist got over a horrible hoarseness, and I'm shortish here."

He tapped his chest so forcibly, that it sounded like a drum.

"All right! I'm in no hurry."

Martin Wynn stirred the fire, and awaited Teddy Wynn's pleasure. Teddy gasped once or twice for breath, took stock of the room and its contents, and sat for a while, evidently collecting his ideas.

It was a large apartment, partaking of the character of a drawing-room to a certain extent—to

a certain extent even of a workshop. Entering it suddenly, one would have been puzzled at its general appearance; it might have represented "a set scene in two compartments." Economy of space had partly necessitated this arrangement, whilst a desire to keep his daughter under his own eyes had also been Martin Wynn's inducement for the eccentric disposal of the first-floor front. On the drawing-room side were evidences of much taste; all was neat and good, if a little Frenchy, as might have been expected from people who had travelled. There were flowers on the mantelpiece, on a centre table, even on a little chess table by the window; all the small spring flowers that a few pence would procure added a grace and harmony to the place, and told of a thoughtful daughter's ministering. The furniture was sound and substantial; Martin Wynn was, to all intents and purposes, a workman well to do.

One portion of the first-floor was doubtless the exclusive domain of Martin—the workshop, manufactory, and study. Signs of order and rule were manifest enough there also, but the place was full of tools, burdened by a bench, and a four-legged hybrid between a stool and a form, and termed a

"Neddy" in the trade. Several pieces of veneering were ranged against the walls; a small table-top, half inlaid with coloured woods, was set out, as if for to-morrow's work; a large and cumbrous piece of furniture of some description, covered by canvas, and looking like a wardrobe in its shroud, took up the space by the door, through which Teddy had recently followed the proprietor.

Teddy was evidently of an observant character, for he noted all these details, and more than these, his quick eyes darting from one object of interest to another, despite the embarrassment of his position there.

Teddy sat in the workshop whilst Martin Wynn and daughter looked from their drawing-room towards him.

"When you're so disposed, you know," hinted Martin at last, and Teddy's legs twitched nervously under the chair, and a something went rolling and gurgling down Teddy's throat at this appeal.

"All right, mister—I'm quite ready."

Teddy tucked his large hat under the chair, and cleared his throat again.

"It's about Zach, o' course."

Martin nodded.

"I've heard all about Zach, being his brother, you see; and I know that there's a somebody going to take him in hand, and trot him into the 'spectable line, just as well as you do."

"Who told you?" asked Martin, quietly.

"You mayn't know," continued Teddy, taking his hat from beneath the chair to place it on his knees again, and tapping the rim nervously with both hands, "that I called wunst at Ground Street, and told the watchman—that's your father—to take Zach furder off, if he didn't want the guv'nor to drop on him. Well, he didn't do nothink of the sort, and the guv'nor dropped on him accordingly. That wasn't Zach's fault."

"Go on."

"You don't know what a rum un, and a deep un, the guv'nor is, sir," said Teddy, setting his hat down again, "and how hard it was for Zach to fight agin him, and do his best. You don't know how hard it was for me to purtend to be on both sides, so as to keep a hi on Zach, and budge him up at a pinch. But lor' bless you, Zach didn't want any budging up, sir; he was right as ninepence!"

"Was he?"

"I knowed it, sir, this arternoon, when he came to me all of a hurry, and axed me to come on to you."

"Oh! did he?" said Martin Wynn, warming to a greater interest in the story; "what did he send you here for?"

"I don't ax you to turn agin my father, but to let him be. He won't do any harm now, cos he can't, in fact; and I aint here to split agin him, or anybody. This—all of this—atween you and me and Zach."

"And Christie," added Martin Wynn—"well, go on."

"Zach was afeard of being took away home—tooked right off into the country on tramp—so he was 'bliged to play the artful, and purtend to be on the square with the old man. He was 'bliged to meet him, Zach was, sir."

"He met him several times—I am aware of it."

"And it might have set you agin Zach," said Teddy, looking very intently towards Martin Wynn, "and the boy meaning good all the time, lor' bless yer! I don't know no one who means more good than little Zach."

"Well, the proof of all this goodness. Have you come here to make me believe in it all?"

"Zach couldn't make father out, sir, till last night. Last night father wanted the key of the gate of Henwood's Wharf—and the key of the counting-house door inside—on'y for a minit or two, jist to look at, sir! He thought Zach might manage it, and he said he'd kill Zach if he didn't. Well, Mister Wynn, Zach brought 'em round to our house this arternoon, cos he said he would—cos he couldn't help it—and the guv'nor took copies on 'em."

Martin Wynn sprang to his feet, and was ready for action at once.

"The place may be robbed to-night!" he said. "What else have you to say? Be quick!"

"On'y that Zach came on to me—I'm not a lodging with father at present, cos of a little dispute atween us—and told me all, sir, crying werry much, and begged me to come on to you, and tell you all; and ax me to explain, sir, how it seems as if he wasn't doing right, which he was all along and to see the guv'nor's game. He couldn't say anythink afore that you might have thought was truth—now, sir, he thinks he can."

"Why did he not come himself?"

"He went off at once to the head un at the office—who knows him—and who was at the tother place to-day, and they've been a-changing the locks, and stopping any bit of play the guv'nor might have been a-thinking over. I was to come on here to save time."

"I do not see that I can do any good—the scheme is frustrated, and the clerks are on their guard."

"No, you can't do anythink more in that," assented Teddy, still nervous, still embarrassed by his big hat, and still a riddle to the comprehension of the marqueterie worker.

"I do not see why your brother, or my sister, or my father, might not have been the messenger here instead of you. Why, to-morrow might not have done for this story," said Martin. "You're sure that all is safe at the wharf?"

"Quite sure."

"I have a better opinion of Zach; he has been playing a foolish game—playing with fire—but he was acting for the best in his own judgment, and he has been of service to the firm. It's good news, and I am not sorry that all my suspicions of

him end like this. I have been watching him, for Mrs. Henwood's sake as well as his own, and I was losing all my trust."

"Was you, though? I'm werry sorry, for that was hard on him."

"I thought that he was turning away from those who had protected him. I did not admire the boy very much—there, I own it—but I have been interested in his progress lately, and in the mystery surrounding him. I see all now—it would have been better, perhaps, to have schemed less, and been more frank, but his moral training has been sadly neglected. I hope that he will be a bright man—with his natural shrewdness, he ought to be. There, I make every allowance for Zach Fernwell, and am sorry for all past suspicions. A singular boy—but better than I fancied him."

"I said so long ago," said Christie, to whom he had addressed these remarks rather than to Teddy.

"Ah! you are like Aunt Polly, seeing a brightness in the darkest places—like all good women, for the matter of that. But *you*"—turning suddenly towards Teddy—"you I can't make out at all!"

Teddy shrank at this direct appeal; he cowered

from Martin as though a blow from that quarter were to be aimed at him, and by shrinking it was possible to evade the full force of it. He looked at the piece of furniture standing in its shroud against the wall—it was the object most remote from Martin Wynn. He shuffled nervously with his feet, kicking out suddenly the hat he had once more deposited on the floor, and sending it into the middle of the room.

"You are Zach's brother. What are *you* doing?"

"I'd rather not be axed about myself," he said, in a low, hoarse voice. "I'm older, harder altogether, and no good's in me—none at all—never was—never likely to be—don't want any!"

"You are interested in your brother Zach?"

Teddy nodded, without altering the direction of his face.

"You don't want him to grow up like yourself?"

"Who—I? well, not now."

"How old are you?"

"Blest if I know!" with a sudden, short laugh, like the crack of a whip. "Somebody says I'm fourteen—it's more likely to be forty. I aint

done talking about Zach yet. May I go on?"

"Certainly."

"Zach will be a credit to you all—for he never was really bad. Mother took care of him—father of me. That made all the difference atwixt us, for I got badder and badder; he betterer and betterer. I've been to prison lots of times, sir—Zach never was inside one? You'll see to Zach now, I hope?"

"See to him—yes."

"Though father's runned off in case the perlice should turn up, he may come back to pay off Zach for turning aginst him; he'll never forgive Zach—he aint a man that's likely to forgit a disappintment. You'll take Zach out of the way, where he can't be found; that's all I want, sir. Clean gone from the lot on us, until he's older, bigger, and able to stand his ground."

"If your father claims him, there is no power to keep Zach from him."

"He won't do it, sir; he don't like making hisself public. There's a lot o' things agin him; but do take Zach to Mrs. Henwood's—the three months is up on Tuesday."

"What do you know about the three months?"

"I've heerd it all; hasn't Zach been trying to do some good for Mrs. Henwood in that time?—hasn't he done it to-day, sir?"

"After a fashion, perhaps—yes."

"Walk him off to her, sir," said Teddy again; "let her know what Zach has done, and let him be hiked away from Ground Street, to where nobody can find him. I don't want to find him—to know nothink about him—to be able to tell who he is, when he grows a big man. I've made up my mind to let him go."

"Why?"

"I don't know," said Teddy.

"Try and think. Why?" repeated Martin Wynn.

The boy, whom he could not understand, shook his head at this second appeal. He had no answer ready to the tongue; he could not explain himself or his motives. He was in the dark concerning them.

"Is it for Zach's sake?" asked Martin, after a pause.

"Well—most likely."

"You would not like Zach to come back and live with you, then?"

"No," after a moment's hesitation; "he's a weak un, arter all. He can't rough it well; he'd get into trouble. I can't be allers helping other chaps."

"One of the family off your hands, then?"

"Yes," said Teddy after another pause.

"Still you came for him once in Upper Ground Street."

Teddy shuddered.

"I didn't know what they were a-doing to him —I didn't know if he was safe—if he didn't want to get away. But when he a'most wanted to stop, and the little 'ooman blowed me up for doing him harm—when he didn't want anyone to fight for him, or take his part, or didn't care so much about me as he used, I comed away—for—good!"

"I think you like this brother of yours?" mused Martin.

"He was a lively little chap enuf," said Teddy —"sharp as a needle, and he took to me a bit, until mother walked him off along with her. That's all, sir."

"And you wish to see Zach grow up a good man—a good and prosperous man."

"Mother said he would—mother was a gen-

nelman's daughter, and must have knowed."

"And if mother's words come true, you'll not be sorry?"

"Who—I? 'Pon my soul, Mister Wynn, I should like to see little Zach a swell some day. Jist for one o' us like to be in the sterrups."

"And not this one?"

Martin had approached to the side of Teddy Fernwell unobserved; and the hand that fell on Teddy's shoulder startled the odd specimen of human nature sitting there with its head studiously averted from all searching eyes.

Teddy cowered more and more.

"No, not this one," he said sullenly.

"This one might be turned into the right road, if he were strong, patient, and had faith. I think so."

"Oh, no!"

"I am sure so."

"Not a haputh of chance, sir—I don't like this talk. I've been locked up," he repeated, as though that fact was absolute, and killed all hope—"locked up heaps o' times, Mister Wynn!"

"Never mind that just now."

"I can't keep my hands to myself—I likes to

take things as don't belong to me. I've been brought up to it; I'm a reg'lar!"

"You would rather go on a thief to the end, than turn honest?"

"I can't be honest—it isn't in me," was the dogged answer.

"Why, you——"

"I want nothink for myself," said Teddy, fiercely; "I aint come here to be preached to—that dodge won't do for me, I'm too old, and its been tried afore. Keep Zach away from all on us—Zach you'll be proud on some day, when father and me are lurched, p'r'aps. I'm a-going now."

"No—don't go yet," said Martin.

For the second time, Teddy looked into the face of the man by his side. It was a quick, half-frightened glance—these Wynns were all "rum people," but this one, he thought, "the rummest!"

"I want to understand you better," said Martin; "I am always put out when there comes across my path someone or something that is incomprehensible. It upsets my pride in analyzing human action, and I am a proud man."

"I don't know what you mean," muttered Teddy.

"Very likely not—I am forgetting my listener. Now, about yourself. You go back to your father?"

"No—he's stepped it."

"What will you do without him?"

"Oh! take care of myself," he added, with a short laugh once more.

"Where do you live?"

"Drag's Court, Seven Dials."

"What number?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"What number?"

"Seven."

"Top floor, I suppose?"

"No—bottom—in the cellar."

Martin repressed a shudder.

"Ah! saves a lot of stairs—may I come and see you?"

Teddy glanced again furtively at Martin Wynn.

"Is this a lark of yourn?" he asked.

"I thought that you might be glad to hear now and then how Zach was getting on—I am often near Drag's Court, and it will not be much trouble to look in and tell you all the news."

"I'll come here for it."

"I am not always at home."

"Nor more am I," said Teddy.

"And this is an honest home, and I shall be glad, very glad, to see you in it, when you are honest yourself. Not till then—any more."

"I aint likely to trouble you much," said Teddy, sharply.

Martin watched him attentively; he had almost touched Teddy's self-respect, and there was a faint evidence of pride in the lad before him.

"But I am likely to trouble you—say next Wednesday evening?"

"What!"

"Zach and I are going to Mrs. Henwood's on the Tuesday—you will be glad to hear what Mrs. Henwood means to do with your brother?"

"Send him away, I hope."

"But you will be glad to hear?"

"Yes," muttered Teddy; "but it's no good you're coming to my place—it isn't safe—it isn't worth while."

"Oh! yes, it is."

"Werry well—you can do as you like."

Teddy gave up all attempt to understand Mar-

tin Wynn's motives; they were beyond his comprehension, and he never let his comprehensive faculty wear itself to death by overwork. This man was very strange—nothing like any man whom he had seen before—but he had been interested in his brother Zach. Teddy had feared that that interest had taken a turn for the worse, and had called at Griffin Street to do his best to alter that impression. That task done, allusions to himself and his own life were to be resented. He was content, he thought, with his position—deeply impressed with the belief that it was too late to alter it, and he repelled all interference with his dark estate. He was "a bad un." Everybody told him that, and he believed it implicitly, and acted up to the standard of that belief. He preyed on society, and society hunted him down occasionally, and locked him up—it was a game of Fast and Loose between them; if he won, he laughed triumphantly; and if he lost, he took the law's punishment with coolness. There was nothing in the world to fret about, and he was a happy fellow in his way. At all events, he tried hard to think so, wondering occasionally why he thought so much concerning it.

"I s'pose you don't want to say any more to me?" said Teddy.

"Not at present. I shall see you again."

Teddy laughed.

"You'll never come to my place."

"I always keep my word," said Martin.

Teddy rose and picked up his hat.

"I shall find you at home?"

"Well—yes."

"Good night, then."

Teddy bade Mr. Wynn good night, keeping his eyes directed to the floor, muttered a response to the same salutation proffered by Christie, and then shuffled downstairs, and let himself out of the house and into the street. He breathed freer in the open air; he flung up his arms in exultation; then he flung up his hat, caught it again, and set it on his head. He began running, then he stopped to consider; then he ran on again, till he reached the Tottenham Court Road, where no less a personage was waiting for him than his brother Zach.

Zach Fernwell was very white—his eyes very red—his whole face a strangely intent one, full of suppressed excitement.

"All right—*you needn't come with me, Zach,*" said Teddy, upon meeting him.

"He don't guess all, then, Teddy?"

"I've told him nothink."

"Not that you——"

"Not that I did anythink but come to him as you wanted me to. There, it is the best now, Zach. It's been an orful row at home, but it's all over, and nobody will never know nothink about it."

"No," said Zach, moodily.

"It's turned out uncommon well, aint it?"

"Oh! Teddy, Teddy," cried the younger brother, "if it hadn't been for you!"

"Hush!—hold your row!" said Teddy, looking round him; "it's square now—keep it so. You're going to Henwood's—Aunt Henwood's—on the Tuesday—it will be square then, o' course. Now, never say a word about what happened this morning—never."

"Never."

"Wish you may die, Zach?"

"Wish I may die, Teddy!"

"Now, go home, and think how lucky you've been. Grow up your best, will yer?"

"And you, Teddy."

"Oh! don't bother about me, boy," said Teddy; "here's off for good! Take a long look at us, Zach, for it's never no more this time—never no more, young feller."

Teddy took Zach by both arms above the elbow, held him thus a moment, then pushed him away from him, and—was gone!

CHAPTER IV.

"AFTER DINNER."

THERE had been a grand dinner-party at Esterfield Lodge, Wimbledon. Mrs. Henwood was not only fond of society, but anxious to shine in it, to be praised by it, and, in every sense of society's ambiguous phrase, to be "made much of." Vain of her position in that "set" for which she lived, she spared no money to give *éclat* to those entertainments which, neither few nor far between, helped to keep the crowd of fashion round her. She had found all her old friends again, and made many new ones; with a restless energy worthy of a better cause, she had striven hard for observation; she had let nothing escape her in her efforts to be fashionable.

Well, she succeeded on the whole; for she was a rich woman, who valued wealth alone for the popularity it bought her. She dressed well,

lived well, and summoned the world to see her live; she had come back from the Continent fuller of life and spirits than we might have imagined, from the first sight of her on board the Boulogne boat. In society, she showed off to advantage; the side scenes of life, the early mornings when she took breakfast in bed, and the French curls were on the dressing-table, or later in the night, when her carriage brought her back from ball, theatre, or opera, and she was toiling wearily upstairs, or the Sundays, when she was *ennuyée* with the labours of the week, this history need not comment upon at present.

Mrs. Henwood had been "showing off" that evening. The reader looks in upon her showing off to the best of her ability in the drawing-room of Esterfield Lodge, a room containing sixteen or eighteen guests, amongst whom were flitting stately flunkies, with calves and coffee-trays predominant.

Possibly it would not require a great effort to believe Mrs Henwood less than thirty-five at that moment; there was no sea-air to disturb her equanimity; the wines had been good—*entre nous*, Mrs. Henwood had a weakness for sparkling Moselle—

the hair-dresser from Bond Street had spent two hours over her, and the ladies'-maids had done their best with the lilac silk, white lace, and diamonds.

Such diamonds! Large enough to be sham ones, and yet real, and of the first water, and not on hire. Mrs. Henwood was proud of her diamonds, as she had reason to be, for she had spent one fortune upon them—she had fortunes to spend, for fortunes were flowing in upon her steadily yet, thanks to Mr. Tinchester's good management—why should she not carry twenty or thirty thousand pounds about her head and neck, as well as people no better off than she was?

She was alone in the world, a daughter excepted, and had but herself to study; let her gather the flowers and the diamonds whilst she might, the morrow would take care of itself, she did not doubt. Sufficient for the day was the comfort thereof!

There were a few wholesalers and their wives in the drawing-room—nice company, if you admire eloquence about the "shop," and the money flowing into the till—one baronet, who was fond of "dinners," and looking up friends to do bills for him; the family solicitors, the family doctor, the

family friend, in the shape of Mr. Tinchester, a little wiry man, with pink eyes; and Lettice Henwood, very dignified and stiff on the satin damask couch, and proud of forming one at this re-union.

Mrs. Henwood we see at her best now, with her company face, assuming all her company airs, rattling away volubly on every topic that came uppermost, gesticulating perhaps a trifle too much with her white kids, and rolling her head certainly too much on her whiter shoulders, but charming company! Everybody considered Mrs. Henwood a charming woman—and everybody's opinion is worth something. If we could get everybody of one opinion—a good and favourable opinion—concerning the books we write, the things we say, the plays we act, and the acts we do, what lucky fellows we should be!

Mrs. Henwood was one of the lucky ones, at least, for the world paid her homage, and called her a nice woman. And she who studied the world, lived and *slaved* for it, was surely deserving of the epithet.

Conversation began to flag a little at Esterfield Lodge, despite all the efforts of the hostess; Lettice

had been asked to play a sonata, and was now hammering away at the second part; no less than three wholesalers had gone to sleep, four young wholesalers had settled down in a remote corner to whist, and constituted themselves an exclusive party, with nothing to say to general company; there was only one flirtation, and that was between the doctor's daughter and a youth with a turn-down collar, and a lisp; the solicitors, Jones and Jenkins, were buried amongst some middle-aged ladies, who wore elaborate caps; Mr. Tinchester had found his way, very cautiously, and even reverently, to the side of his mistress.

Let it be said here, that Mr. Tinchester was devoted to his mistress, as well as to her worldly affairs; an honest little man, ten years her senior, who would have died for Mrs. Henwood, and Mrs. Henwood's interest. He had been in love with Mrs. Henwood from the day of the funeral of the late Mr. Henwood, wharfinger; he had served her faithfully for love, and he was buoyed up with the hope of even making her Mrs. Tinchester one fine day *in futuro*. He could afford to wait, he thought; there was no rival in the field; he was in no hurry himself; he would not mar

one chance of securing his prize by precipitate action. He was content with attending those dinner-parties to which she did him the honour to invite him, keeping himself very humbly in the background, and contenting himself with a quiet, solemn-faced, business kind of flirtation towards the close of the evening, when everybody had said everything to the hostess that was proper and suitable, and he felt that he should not be in the way. Mrs. Henwood was accustomed to laugh behind Mr. Tinchester's back, at Mr. T.'s grave attentions, and faithful reverence—to ridicule him after a very happy manner, in which she excelled, when it pleased her—but she put on the charming stop in his presence, and kept him fascinated by her eye; a bob-tailed, middle-aged bird, waiting the signal to be enthralled by the coils of the serpent.

Mrs. Henwood had made up her mind that evening to astonish the company by a recital of an interesting adventure, and the time seemed fitting for it at last. All the compliments had been paid; all the funny anecdotes related, and the carriages would be ordered their separate ways in a little while.

Mrs. Henwood suddenly dashed into the subject, and the company became all attention. We need not follow her story in its details, narrated though it was with much fluency, self-possession, and easy grace. It is the story of Zach Fernwell, told with considerable embellishment, and making a greater hero out of Zach than might have been anticipated. The story told by Teddy last night to Martin Wynn, but in a way that would have surprised both those friends of ours. How Zach, her nephew—son of a half-sister, who had made a *mésalliance*, poor thing, despite all the good advice that had been proffered her—had proved himself to possess some of the good blood of the family. How he had saved the firm from being robbed of a large sum of money by feigning to be seduced from his allegiance by the designing robbers—she did not allude to her relationship with *them*—and then exploding the plot at the last minute, and putting his benefactors on their guard.

"Such a boy as that I respect," she said in conclusion. "I shall place him in good hands, and make him a business man if I can, and if money can do it. A sharp lad, whom I take in hand from to-night, and give him every chance, watch-

ing over him like a mother. He will grow up a bright man—I shall be proud of this child of my adoption."

"A noble return for faithful service," murmured the family doctor, and that opinion was endorsed on the spot by every member of the social circle.

Mrs. Henwood was looked upon as a heroine—a something more than a woman grateful for past services. And this Zach was a lucky fellow, who would drop in for a handsome thing, no doubt. The baronet only wished that he was Zach, with half Zach's chances of getting on in life.

It was at this juncture that the head-footman—and a man evidently conscious of being head of the establishment, he walked so pompously and well—advanced to Mrs. Henwood, and whispered a few words.

"Why, the hero has actually arrived," said Mrs. Henwood. "Pray excuse me for a few minutes—I am very anxious to see him."

"May we beg the favour of a glimpse of him," asked one of the guests; "heroes are scarce now-a-days, and we are all very curious."

"Patience—*nous verrons*."

Mrs. Henwood went out of the room with her girlish laugh predominant, shaking her fan, jewelled at the hilt, at the last speaker.

Outside the door, the company face vanished, and she stood there on the broad landing-place with her hand upon her bosom, silent and thoughtful.

"I have shown them into the green-room, madam," said the footman in the rear.

"Oh, are you there?" she said. "Go downstairs to the door, and announce me."

The footman preceded her; and Mrs. Henwood looked carefully at herself in a little oval glass inserted in the handle of her fan. Yes, she was looking well; such a man as Martin Wynn should see her at her best that night, and be astonished at her charms!

At the door of the green-room—bearing that appellation on account of green silk furniture, and green silk curtains sweeping from corniced windows.

"Mrs. Henwood."

It was a superfluous formality to announce the lady in her own house, but it had its effect, and added to the grace of her appearance.

She sailed into the room; then paused and looked round with more sharpness and less stateliness. A little woman, neatly, but poorly dressed, rose at her entrance, taking Zach by the hand, and compelling him to rise also.

"Where is your brother?" she asked. "I was not aware that any promise of yours was made to bring that boy hither. I did not expect *you*."

"He left for Paris this morning on urgent business—he and his daughter."

"I thought that he was a man very proud of keeping his word. If my memory serve me rightly, he promised to come himself."

"He did, madam. But he never neglects business, and this task he thought could be better undertaken by me."

"Why better?"

"He thought that you might wish to know about Zach's peculiarities—his ways and that, if he was to stop."

She looked very anxiously towards Mrs. Henwood, then lowered her eyes, as though dazzled by the diamonds.

"Of course, he is to stop."

"Father and I were thinking——"

"Never mind that. I have company here to-night, and cannot stay to hear what your thoughts —your father's—were, my good woman. This boy stops! You should be grateful, both you and this boy should be grateful for the interest I take in him."

"I hope we are," murmured Polly Wynn.

"I will make a gentleman of him."

Zach looked at her nervously—her presence there awed him, at least. The brightness of the new world was bewildering him already.

"You must not trouble this boy by any letters, presents, anything to remind him of his low estate —I want him to forget it. You must not expect to see him at any time, or at any place, but be thankful for the means afforded you, which gave him a chance to rise in life. Only a chance, boy," she said, turning to him, "for if you prove ungrateful for all the trouble that I take from this day—for all the money I shall spend upon you—why, I cast you back again. I—I have been talked into this —and am not quite certain of the wisdom of this step. That boy's looks I don't like much. Why should I be troubled by him!"

"I wish that we might——" began Polly.

"There—there, I have told you that I have not time for any conversation," she said. "Do you want any money? Is there anything to pay for that brat? What is his price—or yours?"

"Zach has always paid his way, Mrs. Henwood," said Polly, flinching very much at the vehemence of the lady, "we don't want any money, in return for our care for him. We are sorry to part with him—he was all that could be wished, until thoughts of coming here unsettled him a bit. You don't see him at his best now."

"I do not think that I need detain you any longer," said Mrs. Henwood; "stay, there is one question I would ask."

Polly Wynn waited quietly for it.

"This boy's father—are you ever likely to see him?"

"To see Zach's father—I hope never, ma'am!"

"You cannot take my message, or my warning to him, then. That is very inconvenient."

"He will not trouble you concerning Zach, now."

"I will lock him up if he do, the ruffian," said Mrs. Henwood. "You never see him, then?" she added suspiciously.

"Surely not!"

"We thought, up at the house, years ago, that you were going to marry him. It was talked about, and it threw us off our guard, and led to mischief and disgrace. Dear, dear!—why didn't you?—it would have been so much the better."

"For your family," added Polly, a little more firmly, "but not for mine. Before I lie down at night, I thank God now that I escaped him."

"Then you——"

"Then, I liked him once—when he was a very different man, and led me on to think of him. But that was long ago!"

"Ah! it seems a long while," said Mrs. Henwood; "but if you had only married Mr. Fernwell, what a good thing it would have been! What a deal of trouble it would have saved, too. I think, my good woman, you can go now. I do not call to mind anything else that I have to say. Your brother—will he stay long in Paris?"

"Not longer than a fortnight, madam."

"He is a lucky man to be so much in request in two countries."

"Stanley and Burns send him to their branch house; they are very fond of Martin. He is the

first in his trade, ma'am, and if ever a man deserved——"

"Really, I don't think I need detain you any longer."

Polly rose, and caught Zach suddenly round the neck with both arms, affectionately garotting him.

"Don't forget me, Zach!—don't forget the prayers I taught you, in the hope of you turning better, and growing good-like. Try and keep good always—that's better than keeping rich, or anything! You'll find it hard at first still; but you won't mind—you'll do your best."

"I can't understand this sentiment," said Mrs. Henwood; "it's very foolish and very unnatural in you—a woman with her bread to earn. I think all this must be, even now, for the sake of the man who jilted you."

"P'r'aps so," said Polly; "I wouldn't like the boy to grow up like the father, or the father to have to answer for the boy's sins as well as his own. And this boy is a something very odd; there's good in him, there's gratitude, there's lots of things, if you'll only try to bring 'em to the light. Oh! you will, ma'am, for your sister's sake."

"Hush!—don't talk to me of that sinful woman," said Mrs. Henwood, fiercely; "in her grave I have not forgiven the disgrace she sought to cast upon me. You should know better—you should have more respect for me—than to mention her name in this house. Have you done with the boy?"

"Ye—es."

She embraced Zach again, and Zach flung his arms round her suddenly; he had remained very stolid until the last moment, then he kissed her passionately.

"I wish I'd sarved you better," he said; "I wish I had to begin agin, all over agin, with nobody atween us!"

"You see—you hear," said Polly to Mrs. Henwood, appealing to the lady to witness the good there was in Zach.

Zach dropped his arms to his side, and became reserved once more.

"I really don't think that I will detain you any longer, Miss Wynn," repeated Mrs. Henwood.

Polly curtsied, and after one more look at Zach, withdrew. The servant led her along the hall, and showed her out of the front door, before which

were five or six carriages waiting to bear the diners-out to their respective homes.

"Martin thinks it for the best—father thinks it for the best—both cleverer than *me*—so much more cleverer!" she said; "but I don't see the good of it all—I never shall, p'r'aps."

Reminiscences of her past interview, of some bitter words spoken therein, also appeared to trouble Polly Wynn. She stopped to consider them when the great swing gate had clanked behind her, and she was on the high road, with her face turned Londonwards.

"For the sake of the man who jilted me!" said Miss Wynn, almost indignantly. "She knew all about it, then; she's pleased to recollect me sometimes, when it's handy to remember things. Well, p'r'aps it was for his sake as I knew him last before he proved himself a villain,—as I saw him last. What came afterwards is neither here nor there, and that boy was like *his* father in the face—uncommon like at times. Well, let's get on, Polly; it's all turned out for the best. I'm a lucky woman, and a thankful one. With Zach off my mind—and he worrited me, because I couldn't make him out—I ought to feel more

happy than I do. Oh! I should be very, very happy, if I could be sure that Zach would keep straight in the big house that's swallowed him up!"

Meanwhile Mrs. Henwood, "going in" for philanthropy and popularity, had taken Zach Fernwell into the drawing-room, surrounded him by the guests, and introduced him as "the little hero." Zach was very shy in company; he even looked inclined to resent the favours heaped upon him, and very sullenly put forth his hand to be shaken by enthusiastic visitors.

"What a mind to conceive so admirable a plan to baffle crime!" said one old gentleman; "I should train that mind very carefully—lead it by its own bias, as it were, to something great."

"Looks like a hero, the little dear!" said a lady to Mrs. Henwood.

"Looks as if he had stolen something!" muttered one of the young wholesalers to a bosom friend.

"I wish Mrs. Henwood well out of her new scheme."

"She's a queer fish."

"And this is a queer freak. I wonder what the

patroness will think of her bargain this time ten years?"

You and I, dear reader, waiting patiently for the end of the prologue, and seeing the elements of danger in our story-proper, may wonder, also, with the rest of them.

CHAPTER V.

TEDDY AT HOME.

DRAG'S COURT, Seven Dials, was not a respectable thoroughfare. In the night-time, a place to be shunned by decent folk, and scarcely safe for the police, unless they ran in couples like greyhounds, and had friends within an easy distance; in the day-time as hideous, loathsome, and repellent "a slum" as ever a parish took pains to keep sacred. A famous place for the Irish in all seasons; for the wild Irish, with little to do but fight with the fire-irons and threaten the life of the rent-man—the middle-man, when he clamoured too much for his half-a-crown a week; a rare haunt for the professional beggars, the blind men who could see, and the cripples who danced jigs after business hours; a place of retreat for young men and women who were "inquired for," because the police objected to a quarrelsome place,

where no one cared to go away quietly or see others be taken quietly; not a locality very much patronized by the members of the knavish fraternity, for there was always a "fuss" there, and there was not a mite of comfort to be found from Number One to Number Thirty-six, but a rare school for beginners—for "young uns" who had not come out, and had nothing against them *as yet;* even a refuge for despairing honesty occasionally, honesty that could not live, and so sought this out-of-the-way corner to die by inches, with nobody the wiser, till the coroner sat upon the body, and returned the usual verdict of "Justifiable Starvation, under Unjustifiable Circumstances."

At Number Seven, Drag's Court, there resided Teddy Fernwell, the boy whose shadow has fallen across these pages now and then. We look in upon him on that Wednesday evening when Martin Wynn had promised to call with the latest news concerning his brother Zach. Teddy was at home, on the ground, or rather the underground floor—not alone in his retreat, however, for he shared that select apartment with an old woman who went on crutches, and sold kettle-holders, and two youths of about his own age,

dealers in lucifer-matches, and in things that came handy! This limited liability company paid eighteen pence a week for the cellarage, contenting itself with the faint light that shimmered through the grating in the stones, and poking at the legs of aborigines when they blocked up the supply by standing in the way.

Teddy Fernwell had had his usual run of high spirits that day, and "at home" and in his glory, Teddy was always at his best. He did not confine himself to his own apartments, but had the run of the premises, and a word to say to all the occupants, from the cellar which he inhabited to the top story, where a woman made boots night and day, nursed a baby, and took another in to nurse. Teddy, who had migrated a few weeks since from Whitechapel, had been long enough in Drag's Court however to make friends with the majority of its occupants; he had a way with him that was generally appreciated, and amongst his own set was considered "the best of company." He knew all the street songs in vogue, was clever at solo dances, great in slang, possessed a fine knowledge of the streets, and could take his own part in any quarrel that was likely—and it was very

likely—to turn up. He had not been in luck's way lately, but his spirits had not given way much; he had had a quarrel with his father—a long and desperate quarrel—but he had come to Drag's Court whistling the last popular melody; nothing had occurred to put money in his purse, nor had he sought to put it there after a reckless mood of his at times that was aggravating to "the school," but his spirits had never flagged; and only at nine o'clock on that Wednesday evening did he suddenly take to staring very intently at the rushlight, flickering its way towards its socket in the medicine-bottle on the table.

Teddy was sitting on the corner of the table—there were no chairs in Teddy's apartment, only one large stone, and on that Mrs. Jones, the old lady before alluded to, landlady of the establishment, and general manager of the company—was ensconced, her hands round her knees, her crutches within easy distance, her kettle-holders still hanging round her neck. Mrs. Jones was smoking a short clay pipe, and interested in Teddy's abstracted *pose*. The other lodgers were out; they had gone to the gallery of the Queen's Theatre, and were not expected home till twelve.

"What's the matter, Teddy?" asked the old woman at last.

"Nothink."

"Why don't yer sing a song, or somethink?" she suggested; "it isn't comfor'ble to come home after a hard day's work, and see yer staring there. It isn't like yer—it isn't as if I hadn't treated yer well."

"All right," said Teddy.

"Yer aint a fretting about yer father, I s'pose —that was a flare-up and no mistake, I hear. I can't see why yer interfered atween him and the kid—it's allers better not to interfere with nuffink."

"P'r'aps so," said Teddy.

"Why don't yer go out and see what's on in the Dials?"

"I'm not a-going out to-night."

"Jackson's got a trial on to-night down the court—why aint you counsel for the persecution?"

"Don't care about it."

"I never larfed so much in all my life as when you come that speech about the willany and wickedness of the pris'ner at the bar. If you'd been double yer age, yer couldn't have done it better."

"I should spile their sport to-night, Mother Jones," said Teddy, yawning. "I think I'll run upstairs and see how O'Reilly's getting on."

"O'Reilly's young uns are as full of fever as ever they can stick—I can't see the good of going there. Yer was there this arternoon."

"Ah! doing the nussing too," said Teddy with a sudden laugh; "you should have seen me walk about the babby till it went to sleep—I'm proud of the twist I've got with them things—they can't stand it, bless you."

Teddy revived a little, and leaped off the table.

"Yer as restless as a fly," grumbled the woman; "yer'll be anywhere, and talk to anybody but me, who's been a mother to yer. I'm a blessed good mind to try the double-up dodge agin in the Strand, than sit here and be made miserable."

"I'll be down agin in a minit or two," said he; "don't go out to-night in the wet, with them boots and that cough. You can't stand wet, I know."

"Well, well, come down and sing somefink, then, Teddy."

"Yes—presently—sing like a robin!"

Teddy was evidently restless—far from himself. He went upstairs and looked in at O'Reilly—

O'Reilly in the first floor, an Irishman out of work, and with a wife and family to support—O'Reilly with scarlet fever in the house and no bread.

The O'Reillys were glad to see Teddy again. Hungry, penniless, and in sore affliction, still the face of a friend who spoke cheerfully was worth seeing and welcoming. Character was no object with the O'Reillys; when they had dropped to Drag's Court, they dropped all thought of decorum; Drag's Court the last stage of self-dependence, after that the glorious Union! No one who lived in Drag's Court was ever in luck's way; even Seven Dials folk looked down upon the denizens of Drag's; the latter were people to be pitied; even thieves out of luck became objects of commiseration there.

Teddy remained with the O'Reillys about a quarter of an hour, offering his advice to the head of the house respecting certain works in progress, and that he had noted during his desultory strolls, and thought O'Reilly might find a job upon; talking to the mother about the young ones, and the parish doctor who was coming in the morning; and trying to amuse the young ones—lying in a heap on the floor—by feigning to take their medi-

cine, and making wry faces after his imaginary doses. Then Teddy went to the back room and found another lodger; discoursed on the prospects of the coming summer season—Epsom Races and Ascot, the last prize-fight, and the "mill" coming off next week; becoming fidgety after a while, and ascending the next flight of stairs in search of further distraction. He descended at last, weary enough to all appearances, went into Drag's Court, and looked anxiously up that charming thoroughfare. The place was resonant with noise that May night; they were singing and laughing over the way; they were fighting three doors off, and there was an Irish wake at the last house. It was raining in Drag's Court—a close fine rain, that rendered things misty and the evening uninviting.

"I never thought he'd come," muttered Teddy; "I don't know that I ever wanted him to come. What's the odds of it?"

Unable to calculate the odds, Teddy walked bareheaded and with his hands in his pockets to the entrance of the court, and looked up and down the wider street. Teddy knew everybody, despite his short residence in the Dials; there was a nod or a few words about the weather, a lively inter-

change of personalities with every passer-by; he would have seemed quite at home and at his ease there, had it not been for his quick glances right and left.

"He's afraid to come, on second thoughts," muttered Teddy once more, "afraid of getting his feet wet—or p'r'aps he's lent his umbrella to 'blige a lady, and can't come out till it's brought back agin. I don't care about him—I never said I did. What's the odds?"

Entering into calculations on the odds again, he went back to Drag's Court, and dived into his cellar, as a wolf-cub might dive into his lair. He found Mrs. Jones still smoking.

"Yer call this a minit, I s'pose?"

"Don't be cross, old gal. I'll sing you the finest song I have in stock to make up."

"I don't want to hear no singing now."

"Then I think I'll go to bed. Tell those chaps not to make too much row when they come in."

Teddy flung himself into a corner of the cellar, crossed his arms on his chest, and tried to sleep; tried very hard, but failed, owing to a head-ache, a sore throat, and a pain at the back of his eyes.

"I s'pose Zach's off by this time," he said, after

awhile; and the woman at the other end of the room asked him querulously what he was grumbling about now.

"About your smoke," he answered; "I don't like it to-night, somehow—it's awful strong—don't you think you have had enuf of it?"

The woman took her pipe from her mouth, to laugh at this—to screech with laughter like a night-hawk; Teddy complaining of tobacco-smoke was a joke worth registering. She knew that something had gone wrong with Teddy—he was not inclined to be particular—what was it now?

Teddy declined to confess to anything wrong, and after awhile dropped off to sleep—to a restless and broken sleep, that irritated the woman who had curled herself, crutches and kettle-holders, into her allotted corner, where she sat like a witch, whom Martin Hopkins would have been glad to "drop on" some two hundred and fifty years ago. Presently the lodgers returning and lighting up again; then a slight dispute between them about a "chance" that had been lost; finally, the light out, and the new comers lying like dogs along the floor. Teddy woke up in the night and asked for water—he remembered that—remem-

bered groping his way out of the cellar in search of it, and coming back giddy and sick, and sitting for awhile on the stairs outside his den, wondering whether he was going to be ill to-morrow. He had not been "flush" of money, or had much to eat lately; he must "go to business" to-morrow, find something quietly, or get locked up for finding it too clumsily. It was no good going on like that any more. He hadn't done anything for himself since he had called on Martin Wynn —he didn't know for what reason, but he hadn't felt inclined. The Wynns had lost him work—"a sight of work!"—they were a queer lot, from the old watchman to that chap in Tottenham Court Road. And they were precious liars, too, some of them; he remembered feeling vexed with them suddenly, before he staggered back to his place in the cellar and lay down again. After that nothing to be remembered distinctly for a long while—for how long, it was difficult to say; but the daylight came and went through the grating many times, and everything was strange, confused, unreal. They were playing music close to his ears—such odd tunes!—when he wanted to sleep; and the old woman with the crutches kept him down when

he wished to get up; and it perplexed him to comprehend why he was not strong enough to cope with her, and even made him cry. Teddy had caught the O'Reilly fever, he knew afterwards; his fellow-lodgers, afraid of fever, had gone further down the court; but Mrs. Jones, who was fever-proof, held fast and did her best, neglecting business to nurse him through it. In the face of every difficulty—want of fresh air, proper nourishment, fair attendance—Teddy fought through the fever, coming out at the end of the contest as weak as a child, too weak to leave the corner in which the battle had taken place, and where the terrible battle against the exhaustion was yet to be fought. The parish doctor had done his best for him; had even recommended him into the House, and would have had him taken into the House, had it not been for Mrs. Jones asserting on oath that she was Teddy's mother, and able to support him—that she didn't want any interference, and she knew—nobody better—"what the workus was, and how they nussed people out of the world on beds two sizes too small for 'em, and shook 'em by the throat when they fancied anything to eat that wasn't in the rules."

Teddy was an object of interest in Drag's Court, and there were many inquiries concerning him. He was missed by his contemporaries; and as the fever left him, there was a difficulty in keeping all his friends from calling upon him at once, and killing him with company. O'Reilly came in for a job at last, and sent down a red herring and half a cup of whisky, with his compliments, on the first Saturday night he touched "wages;" and though Teddy was a little feverish still, and disinclined for the comestibles, they came in handy for Mrs. Jones, though they made her "drefful thusty."

Presently there found his way into the cellar a loud-voiced, earnest, blundering kind of being, with his heart in the right place, but his brains in the wrong; who attacked the invalid on the subject of his moral condition, and preached of eternal punishment in all its branches, saying nothing of hope for the penitent, but a trifle too much concerning the fate of all sinners.

Teddy scarcely understood what a sinner was, and therefore the missionary failed in arousing his patient's interest; he would come again, the missionary said—he was a man who never flinched from the work to his hand, and he

feared nothing. Teddy could not make it out very clearly; he had seen the man before in Drag's Court—once chased by the Irish, whom he attacked concerning their tenets—and he did not see the good of being preached at, and told how his actions were to be rewarded. He could not alter his life—no one would trust him, or help him. He was too old, also, for any change—he was not like his brother Zach. Zach had been in his thoughts during his fever-time; the old woman told him afterwards that he had called out several times for Zach, and once shrieked to her to take his father out of the cellar and brain him with her crutches; and there had been a dim consciousness of a house in Upper Ground Street, with a little woman telling him to leave her room, which became suddenly full of odd pieces of furniture, with Martin Wynn, and a bright-faced child in their midst, looking at him with an interest which he had never seen in human nature hitherto.

He was only strong enough to sit with his back against the wall for half an hour a day, when a visitor whom he did not expect—whom he thought was many miles away from Drag's Court—descended into the cellar. A round-shouldered man of

middle height, with a white face and goat's-hair eyebrows.

"So this is the place you have hidden yourself in, Teddy?" he said, as he entered, and after bowing politely to the landlady. "You see I can manage to find you out when it suits me."

"Here agin," said Teddy, sullenly. "You might let me be. I've had enough of you. I won't go with you no more!"

"You hear him!" he said, appealing to the landlady. "This is my own son—a boy whom I have worked for all my life."

"I wouldn't bother him now; he's got a fever."

"Eh?"

Mr. Fernwell moved a step or two back from Teddy with considerable alacrity. He was a man evidently afraid of fever.

"Oh! I'm all right now," said Teddy. "I shall be right enuf in a day or two, Mrs. Jones."

"You can't get right in this hole—you had no business to come here," said Mr. Fernwell, "when you had a father to take care of you."

"No, I aint," said Teddy, doggedly.

"I am disposed, Teddy," said Fernwell, in an insinuative voice, "to let the past die out, and

overlook our former disagreements. You did not treat me well—you ought not to have interfered between me and Zach; you lost me and yourself hundreds by your foolery."

"I wanted Zach to stop there. I would have him stop."

"You nearly got me transported. Don't you think of that? A son turning against—*peaching* against—his own father. Great heaven! what will the world come to next?"

"I told you what I'd do—I did it!"

"Well, I have not come here, Teddy, to quarrel about it any more," he said, "on the contrary, to make friends, and begin again when we can. I have an idea for making our fortunes, my boy—yours and mine together."

Teddy shook his head. He was very pale, but very firm.

"Never no more!" he repeated, faintly. "I said if ever you hit me agin, I'd cut it. I've done so."

"But you hit me back, didn't you?"

"You get rich by yourself, father, and leave me alone."

"My dear Teddy, you will die in this place."

"I wish I could. I want to die off comfor'bly; I've been trying to. I don't see the good o' keeping as I am. I'm tired of you, tired of life, tired of everythink, and if I could be left alone to go off quietly, all by myself here, I should be so werry glad!"

"Well, I must look up little Zach again, then," murmured Mr. Fernwell. "I can't be without both my children—it is not natural."

From his shaggy eyebrows Mr. Fernwell watched the effect of this indirect threat upon the sick boy in the corner. He was a man who had studied human nature, and knew its weak places, and how to strike at them.

Teddy's eyes dilated. "No, you can't get hold of Zach now. He's safe at last."

"Is he?" said Mr. Fernwell. "I'll just convince you to the contrary, my dear Edward. Are you listening?"

"Yes."

He was listening with his soul in his face, and Mr. Fernwell, seeing his advantage, leaned his back against the wall most remote from his fever-stricken son, and proceeded to make known his future intentions.

CHAPTER VI.

FERNWELL AND SON.

MR. FERNWELL, watchful of results, a trifle nervous concerning the fever, even somewhat nervous concerning noises on the stairs, and what they portended in his rear, proceeded to impress his son with the conviction of his power over all opposed to him.

Standing there in the misty daylight that had found its way through the grating in Drag's Court, he no more resembled a man of power, than he resembled the handsome, clever Mr. Fernwell who had done much mischief sixteen years ago. He was the picture of a scamp; a man who had gone edgeways through life, never presenting a full front to the world, but sidling along in the shadows, hunting for his prey, and more dangerous—like other animals—when driven to his last resource.

Fernwell, the tramp, might be looked upon as a desperate man at the present time; for he was short of money, short of friends, and in one or two pet schemes "to realize," he had been lately balked. Add to this that he was on the black list of detective officers, and that the force would be glad to learn his "whereabouts," and Mr. Fernwell's condition of mind may be considered as far from tranquil. Still he looked tranquil; it was his boast that he could meet the ills of life with composure, and he tried hard to keep up an appearance even to himself. His contemporaries had flattered him by calling him "the cool card," and he had let the name stick to him through life as an appellative in difficult circumstances; only drink threw him off his guard, and made him more of the bully than the philosopher. Mr. Fernwell was as sober as a judge at that time.

"Now, Teddy," he said, "I ask your polite attention. You are aware that a certain lady of our acquaintance has obtained possession of my younger son. Contrary to law this, in the first place, and rendering that lady subject to considerable damages for robbing a parent of his child in the second. You are listening?"

"Yes."

"I hope you understand. It often distresses me to think that my theory of the education of youth may have rendered you *too* stupid. Education did me harm, for it made me over-clever; and I thought that I would bring up my children in a different fashion, fancying that my plan would make you and your brother obedient at least."

He had thought that the more ignorant he kept those boys, the better tools to work with they would remain through life. He had studied deeply the art of reducing their minds to the lowest level of humanity, looking forward to the day when his two children would be profitable to him. He was a great rascal; for he had planned and struggled for their abasement, as other men strive for the advancement of their offspring. He knew that he should never rise himself; that the scales fell too heavily in his disfavour; that he was a tramp, a thief and a ruffian, and would remain so to the end; therefore he resented the world's verdict by training up his children to all that was ignoble, confident of their future help in those undertakings that his cunning might conceive. The boys had turned out sharp enough, but scarcely as

obedient as he could have wished. There was the mother's obduracy predominant at times; and as he had been mistaken in the mother, so might he be in the children, if he did not watch them carefully, he thought. Then had followed the mother's resolution to save Zach from the parent's teaching; a terrible quarrel, several blows, and a separation by consent of both parties. After this, Mr. Fernwell and Teddy doing their best, or worst together—never in luck's way to any great extent, and meeting with misfortune very often. Finally, Mr. Fernwell a widower, and the complications of our story, and of his family arrangements, commencing with that night when the woman from the better days died at Henwood's Wharf.

"Now, I am not afraid of Mrs. Henwood," said Mr. Fernwell; "or of confronting her and demanding Zach back. And I am inclined to think that, with all her money, all her position, all her high-flying, my son, I have a hold upon her."

Teddy had nothing to respond to this. He was too weak to enter into argument; his mind was made up to one thing, and he was clinging fast to that. That was all he thoroughly comprehended just then.

"She is one of the few whom I hate intensely—gloriously," said Mr. Fernwell, rubbing one thin hand over the other; "she has stood a good deal in my way at one time and another, and I bear her in remembrance. She would no more dare to avow the disgrace of her connection with me, or refuse to pay me money for my silence, than she would dare to ask me to her dinner-parties. But I need not dwell upon all this with you. Only understand that I can have Zach back with me to-morrow if I like, and that I will have him back to his old life with me, so help me God, Teddy!"

Mr. Fernwell was less cool and philosophical when he took that bitter oath than he had been heretofore. Teddy paled a little at the intensity of feeling evident in his father's peroration; he was not so strong as he could wish, and a demonstration of force in others had its effect upon him.

"What do you want with me?"

"I'll tell you when you're stronger—when you come to me."

"Where are you hanging out now?"

Mr. Fernwell glanced suspiciously at the old beggar woman.

"Oh! at the old place. They will always tell you at the old place where I am to be found."

"And if I come, you'll drop Zach?"

"You're not so sharp as he is—not so quick quite," said Mr. Fernwell; "but you're better company—older and stronger altogether. Yes, I'll drop him!"

"I never meant to come no more near you," said Teddy; "but I s'pose it doesn't matter to me —who minds?"

"Why, no one, to be sure."

"I aint likely to grow good, or find people to take care of me," said Teddy; "and if you don't put upon me any more, I may come back. These are hard lines enuf, and can't be wus."

"You have no fine ideas about turning out a Christian?—it's all humbug, Teddy, to suppose one man is better than another. We are all alike, only the rich people have got the start of us, and have no occasion to look out for themselves. They know well enough that everybody *must* live."

"Ah!" said Teddy, listlessly.

"And if they will not help us, why, we *must*

help ourselves. The thing is plain enough—I've explained it to you half a dozen times before."

"Ah! yes; it's plain," replied Teddy.

"If I had been more nimble on my pins," broke in the beggar woman here, "I mightn't have been satisfied with kittle-holders. I never thove myself, because I couldn't get away clear arterwards, and because I did somehow arout it. If we could do arout it, all the better," said the woman, suddenly assuming a moral tone; "if Teddy could, I'd be glad enuf, for Teddy's a good sort, and ought to be better off altogether. But if we can't, then what's the good o' thinking twice on it. Aint we hunted down enuf by everybody, I should like to know? Aint we shoved about, and moved on, and scuffled under foot, the lot on us, who aint respectable?"

"I don't quite follow your charming line of argument," said Mr. Fernwell; "but it's true enough, no doubt. And Teddy's a good sort—I agree with you there. It is for that reason that I look over much that is objectionable in Teddy. He don't bear any one a grudge, and though I shall be never able to understand his actions of last month, or why he turned against me like a—

like a young devil as he was, still I appreciate—no one better than I—the good points in his character. Can I speak more fair, Teddy?"

"No."

"In my own opinion, Teddy, I am inclined to think that Zach had better stay with his new friends, and work his way to independence. When he's rich—which he may be, for Mrs. Henwood's fool enough to make him rich some day—why, he'll be of more use to you and me than he is now."

"We'll leave the little chap alone," said Teddy, doggedly, "always to keep away from him!"

"As you please. We shall have many opportunities of discussing that question. When will you be strong enough to leave here?"

"I don't know."

"It's very inconvenient just now, you being laid up like this. When you can walk, I shall want you to—— May I ask where you are going, my dear madam?"

Mrs. Jones had risen, taken up her crutches, and was proceeding to withdraw, when Mr. Fernwell came with alacrity between her and the door.

"I'm going out."

"A few minutes, please," he said, "and I shall be gone myself. I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance; and though I put every confidence in you, still it would be obliging me to remain where you are for the present."

"They aint any money offered for yer, is there?" asked Mrs. Jones, "that yer so 'tickler."

"I don't care to be known or seen just now."

"I won't say a word. I aint the sort."

"Stop where you are, woman," Mr. Fernwell said with less politeness as she once more made a movement in advance. "Sit down again, will you. I let no one pass out here till I have gone myself."

"Will you let anyone pass in?" inquired a voice at the door.

Mr. Fernwell jumped, then assumed his usual equable demeanour, and moved aside to allow of the ingress of the speaker. Teddy gave a stifled cry, fell forwards on his hands, and looked hard at the new-comer.

"Is it you, sir? Why, you aint come to see me, arter all? You aint been and come here for that?"

"To see you—and to help you, if you'll let me."

Teddy struggled back into his old position; Martin Wynn, marqueterie worker, turned to address Mr. Fernwell, who was leaning against the wall with his hands in his pockets. Mrs. Jones, who had returned to the fire, suddenly lighted up the scene by placing a rushlight on the table, an addition to the decorations at which Mr. Fernwell scowled. He had never liked too much light on his actions, but still he was equal to the emergency. He was a clever man, with his wits in the right place. He turned to Martin Wynn with celerity.

"What's your name, sir, and your business, and where do you work? You must give an account of yourself—I'm Driver—Scotland Yard. You know well enough?" he added with a nod.

The voice had changed, the face had changed; it was a clever piece of acting for an impromptu performance, but Martin Wynn was prepared for it.

"I thought you were Fernwell, of Whitechapel, at first. It's a striking likeness."

"Oh! is it?"

"I don't forget faces very often, let them alter as they will—and yours has altered very terribly, Richard Fernwell, since I saw it down in Warwickshire. We were younger men by sixteen years."

"An excellent memory," said Mr. Fernwell with a laugh. "Supposing that I am the man, what then?"

"I have no wish to detain you now. I am *not* from Scotland Yard, sir."

"To detain me, were I disposed to value my liberty, or consider it emperilled, would be to risk your life, *mon ami*," said Mr. Fernwell, stealing his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat.

"I risk my life every day," was the somewhat enigmatical response; "and I shall not be afraid to arrest you, when I see the necessity for the action. At present I do not."

"Lucky for you."

"Before the interview is over I may."

The hand that had been stealing away from the breast pocket returned to it with decision, and remained there for a while. The face of Richard Fernwell set hard and cold and defiant; the man to risk all and to dare all. He placed himself in

a position more convenient to his own comfort, crossed one leg over the other, and said,

"I await your pleasure, Martin Wynn."

He never forgot faces also; years had no more weakened his memory than Martin's. He was a man who treasured everything. After many years they met in that close, stifling den—the good and evil genius of Teddy Fernwell—to do battle for a soul.

CHAPTER VII.

GOOD AND EVIL.

"YOU have been ill?" said Martin turning to the large-eyed, white-faced lad heaped in the corner of the cellar; "you are ill now."

"I have had a touch of the fever, Mr. Wynn—but I'm better."

"And no one ever stood a fever like that Teddy there!" chimed in the old woman. "I can say that for him amongst t'other things. He took it just as if he liked it."

"It didn't hurt," muttered Teddy.

"I could not keep my word to call upon you," explained Martin. "I had a duty to fulfil to my employers, whose orders, whilst I am their servant, stand first to be obeyed. In my hurry, even, to tell you the truth, I forgot you."

"Very likely, sir," said Teddy, with a feeble smile; "it didn't matter."

"Yes, it did—I was in the wrong."

"You couldn't have done no good by coming here," said Teddy.

"You expected me?"

"Just a little, at fust—on'y at fust like."

"I have been thinking about you a great deal, Teddy," said Martin, after a moment's pause, "thinking how hard it was—how strange it seemed—for one brother to have every chance offered to amend his life, and for the door of hope to be shut, as it were, in the face of the other."

"Teddy will not comprehend allegory, Mr. Wynn," said Fernwell, breaking in here. "I would have put it a trifle more plainly to him, had I been in your place. You will excuse the interruption?"

"I think he understands," said Martin, without looking in the direction of the speaker. "What do you say, Teddy?"

"I make it out, sir," replied the lad; "but I don't see——"

"Ah! that comes presently," interrupted Martin; "patience, I think you will. In travelling to France with my little girl, I thought a great deal of you—thinking of you the more for breaking my

word—and coming back again, I talked about you to Christie a great deal; asking her advice, and seeing with her the chance to alter you. Not to raise you to a level with your brother's position, but to make you honest and true."

"Ho—oh!" croaked Teddy, "that's a good un, that is. Lor' bless you, sir, I aint got a chance—I've said so afore—it's too late for any one to trust a cove."

"I'll trust you."

Teddy stared for awhile over Martin's head; he did not look him in the face; the fingers—long and attenuated with his illness—cracked as he interlaced them nervously together. He found a voice at last, found a laugh, too, somewhere about him, and indulged in it.

"That's a good un too," he repeated. "Lor' bless you, sir, I couldn't do it. I aint got the pluck—I aint got the strength—I aint never learnt to keep my hands from picking up things on the quiet. You know what I am—ask anybody in Drag's Court what I am, sir."

"I will trust you."

Teddy's fingers cracked again.

"I'm an old prison-bird, and everybody knows

me—there isn't a policeman, this side of the water, or the tother, that doesn't keep a hi on me when I'm on the look-out. I'm like Jack Sheppard, sir!"

"I will trust you," said Martin Wynn, for the third time; and "Oh! that is a good un!" said Teddy Fernwell, once more, in reply.

"Teddy, you would not rob me, if I took you into my service, taught you a trade—my trade—and made an apprentice of you. Come, now, would you rob me, to begin with?"

"No," said Teddy, sullenly.

"Then come to my house—I shall be glad to see you."

Teddy's only response was the cracking of his fingers again—he hung his head more upon his chest, which laboured very strangely. It was a great temptation to turn away from evil, and try to grow up like Zach; but the faith in himself was not there, and he could not believe in man's trust in him.

"You would not be afraid of hard work?" said Martin Wynn.

"Not likely."

"It is hard work to give up evil, and learn to

walk uprightly before men and your God. Don't shun that work—don't be a coward!" said Martin.

"What—what do *you* say?" asked Teddy, suddenly looking towards his father. "You know best what I am."

"I don't care for his opinion," said Martin.

"Still it is called for," Mr. Fernwell remarked, coolly, "and it is the opinion of a man of the world, like yourself. I ask you, Mr. Wynn, to give up troubling a boy, almost sick unto death, with your suggestions. You would not find a grateful pupil in Teddy; you would begin to preach at him and bully him; you would be ever watching him, lest he should steal your money, your tools, your time; you would find that he was too old for change, and that every fellow whom he met would sneer at his efforts to be any better than he is. Why, his life with you would be a curse, sir—he would be watched from door to door by the police; every man and woman to whom he spoke, or to whom he was sent, would be warned of his past life; he would meet his old pals, and be seized upon for consorting with them; he would be tried and locked up again for being in suspicious company; he would find no happiness anywhere,

or anyhow, in that hard, cold, religious world, to which you would consign him."

Mr. Fernwell spoke with great energy, and Teddy listened attentively. He saw the life which his father drew, and shuddered at it. It was what he feared; what he knew beforehand.

"You would keep him a thief?" said Martin.

"I would keep him with me," replied Fernwell; "we have been unfortunate together, and we will remain together to the last. If you could do any good," he added magnanimously, "I would not—lonely as I am—make one effort to stop you; but I know what a fool's task it is to keep honest in the face of a world that distrusts you."

"Did you try to keep honest?"

"I did. I found plenty of preachers—but no friends. Believers in the Gospel, but not in *me*. I lost my clerkship, and—went adrift, sir. The wreck that you see before you is all that is left of an honest man."

"You were never honest," said Martin sternly. "You were always untruthful, studying to deceive others, working at your own plans in the dark, and scheming for yourself. Had that boy the percep-

tion that should be natural to him, he would take you for his moral."

"The boy understands me—you don't."

"'Almost sick unto death,'" said Martin, quoting the previous words of Richard Fernwell as he turned to Teddy, "supposing that you had died."

"Ah!" said Mr. Fernwell, assuming his indolent attitude again, "now for the talk appropriate to the occasion—the king of terrors, the bottomless pit, and the teeth-gnashing accompaniments. Try that on him as the 'next little article.' Are you ready for a sermon, Teddy?"

"If you had died," said Martin Wynn very earnestly, "died in this sin at which your father sneers, and left me powerless to act for you, I should have been sorry."

"Why?—you!"

"I should have lost my chance of saving you."

Teddy laughed again—more feebly and hollowly than ever.

"I've been thinking of that *dodge*—talking of it, afore to-day. I think over it a good deal just now."

"Well?" said Martin anxiously.

"I don't see the good o' my stopping—I don't

want to be any wus, and I must if I get up agin. I don't feel as if I was afeared to shut my eyes and go off *anywhere they like!* I couldn't have done any better nor I had—I didn't know!"

"Knowing now more than you are aware, for God's sake, give yourself one trial. My poor boy, in that humility of yours! I see beyond such hope for you! I ask you to think of the better life which you may lead from this day."

"I'm a sight too old, Mr. Wynn. It's werry kind o' you, but it can't be done."

"So hard as this—and yet so young!" moaned Martin.

"All this is an odd freak of yours," said Mr. Fernwell; "pardon me if I add, an intrusion upon our domestic arrangements perfectly uncalled for. I cannot comprehend this noble disinterested family of the Wynns—people running about to see with whom they can hamper themselves, and taking an intense amount of trouble and future mortification to themselves, in order to render everybody else uncomfortable. We Fernwells are for ever indebted to your eccentric race, but we must protest —a little—on so studied an interference with us."

Mr. Fernwell made a low bow, and worked his bushy grey eyebrows at a rapid rate. Martin Wynn regarded him unmoved—the shafts of the thief's satire pattered harmlessly against his coat of mail.

"I knew your wife when she was an impulsive girl, foolish and romantic, but good, and generous, and truthful. You were a knave then, and led her wrong; you schemed for a fortune with her, and missing it, missing all support from unforgiving parents—God has forgiven them their hardness, I trust—you sank swiftly and suddenly to evil, dragging your wife down with you. You went wholly bad, and I dispute your right to any claim upon your children."

"What you dispute does not affect me, Mr. Wynn, any more than your reproaches."

"You have forfeited all claim to your children. Confessing, as you do, a fixed intention to make this boy's life a copy of your own, I am here to say that it shan't be!"

"There you are, losing your temper, and talking more illogically in consequence," said Mr. Fernwell. "How will you help it?"

"I will give this boy a fair chance—untram-

melled by your advice, direct from the fiend's as it is. I will shut you up as I would a wild beast. Justice is looking for you, and I will aid her in the search. I hand you over to the police to-night."

Martin Wynn turned to Richard Fernwell as he spoke—towering above him with his hands clenched, and his face flushed with honest anger, but stamped with a resolution that was decisive, and, to the man watching it, appalling.

Fernwell moved back a step, and then there flashed in the candlelight the curved blade of a clasp knife, keen and glittering as a stiletto.

"I am armed. I shall kill you, if you approach!" he hissed.

"I am not afraid," said Martin, advancing one step nearer, and keeping a wary eye on his adversary.

Teddy tried to rise to his feet, and then fell back again. The woman on the stool began to wring her hands; it was a moment of suspense and terrible danger.

"You will never leave this place alive!" said Fernwell, backing once more, but speaking very fiercely; "by all that's holy, I shall knife you, if you come another step!"

"Oh! there'll be murder done here!—yah!" screamed Mrs. Jones.

"Silence, you hag!" cried Fernwell; "no noise—I hate noise. Martin Wynn, what do you want of me, that you tempt me to your death?"

"A chance for him."

"He will not take it—how can I help that?"

"Will you leave him to choose for himself, not influencing him for evil by a word or look? Will you go away now for good, leaving him to come to me or you, to life or death, whenever he is strong enough to pass out of this place?"

"I will—why didn't you say so before?" said the cowed brigand. "I am not fond of quarrelling, and I spill no more blood than I can help. Is it a bargain?"

"You will go from here never to return again?"

"I'll take blessed good care he doesn't!" muttered Mrs. Jones, "unless he wants all Drag's Court on his back."

"I will come not here any more," said Fernwell; "I don't want to influence Teddy one way or another—if he thinks that your company's better than his own father's, he can have it. I

am not the man to stand in his way—I never was."

"Go, then."

"Lucky for you that we square our accounts in so amicable a fashion," said Fernwell, still keeping knife in hand, and still distrustful—"in your prayers to-night, think of your escape."

He would depart like a brave man, he thought, and with these last words he backed himself out of the cellar, and went upstairs backwards, knife in hand still. He let himself cautiously out of the house, panting very much, as though he had been running, and then went on towards the open street, beyond the court, where danger threatened him. He looked round very cautiously before he emerged from his retreat, as though liberty were precious to him; and then, with his head bent low, his hands in his pockets, and himself in the shadow of the houses—the family habit of the Fernwells—he passed away into the night, trembling still with the fear that had unnerved him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST EFFORT.

TEDDY, who had been terribly interested in the dispute between Martin Wynn and his father, laughed, for the first time in a natural manner, at the conclusion to it.

"I thought the guv'nor would shut up when it came to a fight," said Teddy; "he's rayther weak, and not like he used to be. But still you might have felt that knife; he never was partic'ler, and he wouldn't have been lagged peaceably. But what's the good of it all?" he added—"what's the good of this row?"

"He has been persuading you to live with him," said Martin.

"Yes, he has."

"Well, I ask you to think of me instead of him—to let me try if it's not possible to save you?"

"Quite unpos——" began Teddy, when Martin checked him.

"I say that it's hard work for you as well as me," said Martin, "and you tell me that you are not afraid of hard work?"

"You heard what he said."

"I pay no heed to his advice—if you do not, it will be better for you."

"He's right in what he says—I see it all as plain as he does. I don't want to be any better nor I am."

"Your brother, my sister tells me, had this same fear. He shook it off. Are you weaker than he?"

Teddy made a wry face, but did not answer.

"Are you weaker than he?" asked Wynn again.

"He never was a thief."

"No matter."

"I'm a reg'lar."

"No matter."

"I'm the awfullest liar that ever was."

"I'll tell you what may be gained by sticking to the truth."

"I can't stick to anythink."

"There, I wouldn't be a-worrying the boy any longer, and him so ill," Mrs. Jones ventured to comment here; "yer're a good sort, taking all this trouble, sir; but Teddy's not the chap exactly to suit—we've had parsons here, and doctors, and priests, and Teddy can't bear preaching to—he never could."

"Are you honest?" asked Martin, turning to her.

"It's like yer imperence to doubt it."

"You are a kind woman, or the boy would have died here."

"We helps one another in Drag's Court—and Teddy's a bit of a favourite with the lot on us. Atween us we kept him out of the workus—he was not a-going there if we could help it."

"Be kinder still, and do not interfere between us for a minute or two—I am going shortly."

"Though I mean nuffink rude in my way," she answered, "the sooner, I shall like it."

Martin turned to Teddy.

"My sister set me a good example," said Martin; "she is good in deeds, and I would profit by her efforts. I see where I have been wrong—where I have feared too much."

"Your sister, Mister Wynn, knew what I was like at once."

"No—she was wrong there. I am right in my judgment of you," he said, somewhat conceitedly; "I am interested in you, Teddy."

"Thankee—but you don't know me."

"Shall I tell you what I thought of doing?"

Teddy began his short, meaningless laughs again.

"If you like."

"I'm in want of some one to help me in my work—he who helps me must be very quick with his fingers and his eyes—there, your natural gifts come handy."

Teddy stared hard at Martin Wynn. Martin had assumed a different style of address; he saw that it was vain as yet to attempt to pierce through the hardness which encased this lad's understanding.

"I get my living cutting out small pieces of wood, making them into patterns on tables—it requires a keen sight, and a steady hand. I want to teach you that trade, so that you can help me in good time."

Teddy waited patiently, even with interest, for Martin to continue.

"I shall give you very little wages—not any at first—but I shall board you with a family I know, and you will have to come to work early in the morning, and leave off late at night. I shall make a profit out of you, and in odd moments I will do my best—without 'worrying' you too much—to make you as good a man as I can. I wish to say some day to Mrs. Henwood—that's the secret of it all, Teddy—'there's the boy whom I tried to save from wrong, as good a boy as yours, as true, and honest, and warm-hearted. Beginning late in life to turn away from evil, he yet fetched up along the road I pointed out to him, and met his brother Zach there!'"

The dark eyes drooped more and more; the head sank lower on the chest; the thin hands went up to the face and stopped before it. Martin saw his advantage, and continued.

"It is the love you had for Zach that I have heard of—that I have seen—that tells me what you may be, if you'll try. You are not so old, so stubborn, so hard-hearted as you think—there, let me do my best? It is not too late—it has been the right time to come in search of you."

"You don't know what I am," gasped Teddy;

"if you knew all, you'd turn agin me like the rest."

"I will trust you, whatever your sins may be," said Martin; "won't you trust *me* a little?"

"No, no—I can't!" shrieked Teddy; "I won't hear no more. I'll go to *him*—I'll try hard to die here, and be rid o' the lot on you. Sir, you can't help me—I swear to God, you can't!"

"Hush!—He will not bear testimony to that."

"I can't stand no more on it."

Teddy flung himself full length upon the floor—face forwards—and lay there like one dead already. He neither moved nor spoke when Martin addressed him again; only gave an irritable writhe away from him when Martin touched his arm.

"Very well," said Martin, sadly; "I must go. "I can do no more—I will come to-morrow—may I?"

Teddy did not answer.

"You have your life to come in your own hands—after this your own fault, whatever happens. Don't say everybody's against you after this—I am going."

No answer.

"Good night."

Teddy replied not, and Martin Wynn crossed towards the woman, sitting very gloomily on her stone, staring at the floor.

"Don't, for your soul's sake, try to lead that boy to evil. That sin will weigh heavily against you at the Judgment, if you do."

"It's no affair of mine," muttered the woman. "I don't say nothink."

Martin Wynn went away silent and thoughtful, making no further effort. He had done his best, but he feared that he had failed; and like a good man as he was, stirred to his heart's depths to do good—as, thank God! such men are stirred here and there—he went home grieving at the stubbornness of the evil he had encountered that night.

The next day he was in Drag's Court again, but Teddy and the woman with the crutches were gone; and to his inquiries he was met by vacant looks and utter ignorance—real or assumed, it was doubtful which, for they were good actors in Drag's Court. He went away discomfited—baffled in his search—foiled at all points.

"It was not registered that *I* should save him," said he. "I have had my chance and lost it. I

was not quick enough; I was too proud—too fearful of myself and Christie—and he passes away, poor fellow, like a dream. I have been too much a preacher, and too little of a Christian—too stern with one who had all his life met sternness, but never the kindness or gentleness that might have softened him. Well, God help him!—I can't."

He went back to Griffin Street and set down to his work, after shaking his head to an eager question of his daughter.

"Strange that this child should have shown such anxiety to save him," he said to himself at a later hour, when bending over his work intently. "She gets more strange every day, try as I will—she is a woman in thought now, and troubles me. I should have been more earnest with him—I am sure I should—if it had not been for her. If I could only begin again, fearing less for those I love, and trusting more in Him I try to serve!"

But the task was over; the lesson had been delivered, and there came no penitent to Griffin Street. The days stole by—days that went on to weeks, at last lengthening very much, bringing much sunshine and the breath of summer with them. Three weeks to the day since Martin Wynn

had visited Drag's Court; he remembered the time as he sat, late at night, poring over his work by the gaslight which was bad for him, as his daughter had often warned him. Every night now when work was ended, he went down with his daughter to the street-door to stand for awhile and wait, as it were, for him who never came in search of the help that had been proffered. Now and then as they stood there, a figure like *him* hurried by them—a something of the streets as desolate as he was, perhaps, and as full of disbelief in any good—and yet not him for whom they seemed to wait. That night they were standing at their posts once more—for the last time, perhaps—the daughter's hand upon the father's arm.

"If he had only come!" sighed Martin; "if I had had only *my* chance, Christie, to save him!"

"He may come yet," said Christie.

"Never again the chance for me—or him!"

As he spoke there darted from a doorway opposite—dense and dark as the fate which would have held it back, a tall thin figure, ragged, and wan, and wild. It came towards them, reeled, stopped, and then came on again with arms outstretched,

and with a look upon its face—a look for mercy, that neither man nor child standing there ever wholly lost sight of again.

"I've come!" gasped Teddy. "Oh, don't send me back agin!"

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Martin Wynn.

"I am so glad!" cried Christie; "glad with all my heart! Father," she added, turning to him, "I said that he would come here, for my faith was strong in him!"

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON: PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE.